

CHRISTIAN COURIER

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Arab Islamic attitudes toward
Jews and Zionism p.10

First blizzard in Canadap.14



59th year of publication

Prosperity, jobs, globalization, corruption, security, justice

Two world forums survey the state of global economy

DAVOS, Switzerland (Zenit.org) – The annual meeting of economic and political leaders in Davos saw Europe and the United States making peace after the divisions caused by the war in Iraq. The five-day talkfest that ended Sunday, Jan. 25 was generally low-key and saw no major protests by anti-globalization groups.

No one major idea dominated the meeting. The theme chosen, "Partnering for Security and Prosperity," was developed in seven subject areas: ensuring global security; promoting global growth; managing new risks; building corporate resilience; spurring innovation, harnessing the diversity of values; and reducing inequity. Over 2,200 participants were subdivided into more than 250 sessions, including workshops and interview-style panel discussions.

Increased risks

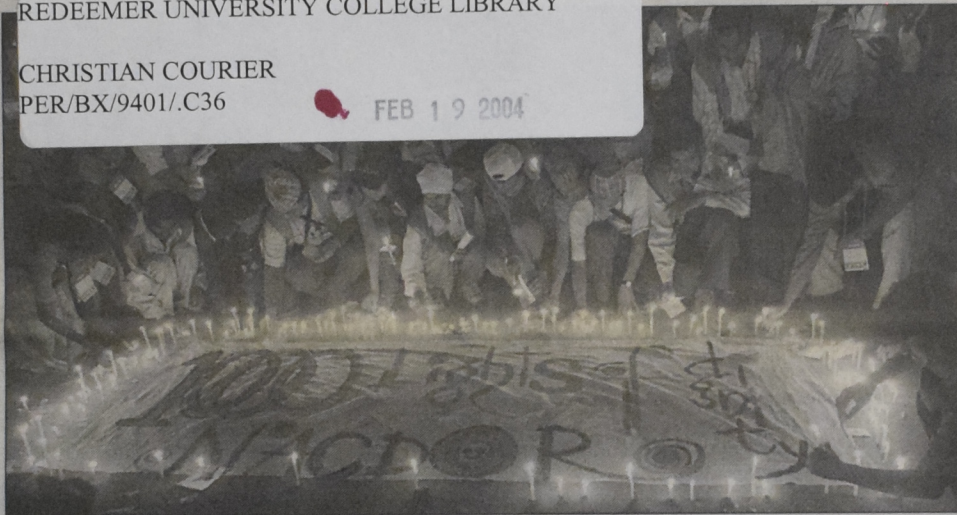
Before the meeting Klaus Schwab, executive chairman of the World Economic Forum that runs the annual meetings, explained: "I think we have to accept that we are living in a world of much higher risk." In an interview published Jan. 21 in the *Wall Street Journal*, Schwab identified a number of factors that have increased risks: the imbalance between industrialized and developing countries; monetary imbalances with the fast increase in value of the euro; and three very high US deficits (trade, fiscal and foreign exchange). An objective for Davos was "to see how those risks could be reduced without surprises or major chaotic situations for the world," Schwab said.

Opposing views emerged at the meeting's first session on the

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Anti-globalization demonstration in Mumbai, India

economy. Merrill Lynch International chairman Jacob Frankel said the world is entering a "synchronized global recovery led by the United States," according to an article published on the *Newsweek* website. But Morgan Stanley global economist Stephen Roach was pessimistic, worrying about the current US account deficit and what he saw as a weak American economy.

Bridge the gap

Numerous political leaders also addressed the gathering. Those present included Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, Iranian President Mohammad Khatami and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and US Vice President Dick Cheney also gave major speeches.

Pakistan's president called for increased efforts to bridge the gap between the West and the Islamic world. Musharraf recommended an "enlightened moderation" that rejects extremism and focuses

Supreme Court refuses to criminalize all forms of spanking

Canada's highest court turned back the concerted efforts of those seeking to outlaw all forms of corporal correction by parents on the basis of the UN charter of rights. It has upheld the right of parents to spank their children. It also however, drew up some guidelines that set "reasonable limits" to such discipline.

The court did not prohibit the use of force on children altogether, but it outlawed the use of instruments like straps or belts, prohibited blows or slaps to the head and set age limits – no spanking before age 2 and beyond age 12.

The Canadian Foundation for



The Supreme Court of Canada

Children, Youth and the Law had sought the prohibition of all corporal punishment or correction. It calls the use of force child abuse and argues that to allow it is to make children second-class citizens.

Teachers joined several other groups in opposing any law that

attention on the socioeconomic development of Islamic countries.

Musharraf added that two "dangerous misperceptions" have spread about Islam: first, that it is being targeted by the West; second, that it is a religion of extremism, militancy and ignorance. The actions of a few extremists should not be regarded as being supported by the whole faith, Musharraf observed.

Cheney in his address last Saturday concentrated on political themes. The US vice-president noted a number of positive developments in the fight against terrorism: the capture of Saddam Hussein; the adoption of a democratic constitution for Afghanistan;

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would outlaw all forms of physical constraint, fearing that it would lead to assault charges against teachers if they physically restrain children. Teachers can still use force if it is necessary to restrain children, but they are not allowed to use any form of corporal punishment.

Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin stressed that "degrading, inhuman or

harmful conduct is not protected" but only "sober, reasoned uses of force" used for educative or corrective purposes, related to restraining, controlling or expressing disapproval of the actual behavior of a child that is capable of benefiting from such correction.

See Spanking page 3 ...

News

Prosperity, jobs...

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and Libya's decision to stop its weapons of mass destruction program. Cheney warned, however, of the continued threat from a sophisticated global network of terrorists.

Call for more ethics

With corporate scandals on both sides of the Atlantic still fresh in mind, Davos also addressed business ethics. "We have an environment in which fraud and malfeasance have destroyed jobs and assets, while chief executive pay goes up year after year," William Parrett, chief executive of audit firm Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, told a panel discussion.

But many conferees warned that imposing additional laws in order to govern companies is not enough. Robert Diamond, chief executive of the British firm Barclays Capital, said companies also need to ensure they hire CEOs of integrity.

Meanwhile, Davos participants, who traditionally favor globalization, expressed concern about its consequences for jobs. "They question whether the increasingly global economy will produce as many high-wage jobs in rich countries as once was expected," the *Wall Street Journal* reported.

Globalization advocates argue that when jobs in richer nations are lost to lower-wage developing nations, in turn this will mean more opportunities for workers to move up to higher-skilled positions. But recently an increasing number of skilled, white-collar jobs are moving from rich nations to developing countries. Estimates of US service workers whose jobs have been outsourced vary from 250,000 to 500,000, which could just be the beginning.

Zhu Min, general manager of the state-owned Bank of China, suggested that the United States needs "to reposition itself. Manu-

facturing is gone; services are going. Research and development is still there. [The US] needs to move up the [development] chain."

In the Feb. 2 issue of *Time* magazine, Michael Elliot observed that while a year ago Davos was marred by poisonous US - European relations, this year the mood was "sweet and satisfying." He noted that Cheney even praised the "old continent" and said that America "wants the strongest possible Europe."

A parallel forum

Half a world away, and at the opposite end of the ideological spectrum, the World Social Forum held its gathering this year in the Indian city of Mumbai, formerly Bombay, Jan. 16-21. This year's meeting was shifted from Porto Alegre, Brazil, in an attempt to involve a greater number of Asian participants.

Starting in 2001 the World Social Forum has held a meeting

in parallel to Davos, in a move to provide an alternative focus for anti-globalization forces. The events in Mumbai drew around 100,000 people. Topics at the meeting included opposition to the US-led war in Iraq, Third World debt, trade arrangements, and the fate of India's lowest caste members, the Dalits.

Among the speakers were José Bové, French farmer and noted anti-globalization activist; Joseph Stiglitz, a former World Bank economist who wrote *Globalization and Its Discontents*; and Arundhati Roy, an Indian novelist.

While everybody in Mumbai was clear about what they are against - "capitalism, imperialism and George Bush" - it was more difficult to say what "precisely they are all for," the British newspaper *Guardian* noted.

In fact, noted the *Guardian*, a major split developed between the "left and extreme left." This led to the organization of a rival

conference, titled Mumbai Resistance 2004, organized by groups who claimed that the forum has been "co-opted by capitalism." The *Hindustan Times* quoted one of the organizers of the rival meeting, Rona Wilson, saying: "We want to sharpen the struggle against imperialist globalization and war."

A post-meeting analysis published by the *Guardian* judged that "the common thread running through every argument was of the struggle of the powerless against the powerful."

The same article observed that while the Davos meeting focused on how to generate more growth and resources in order to fight poverty, the Mumbai gathering emphasized more economic and social justice first. This division will no doubt continue. But at least this year both meetings were free from the violent protests by anarchical groups that have marred past gatherings.

Large numbers of Christians drawn to World Social Forum in Mumbai

The World Social Forum (WSF) 2004 that met in Mumbai January 16-21 is the fourth in a series of open international forums to provide a democratic people-centered alternative to the Davos (Switzerland) World Economic Forum. Under the theme "Another World is Possible," more than 75,000 people met from different parts of the world to work for economic justice. Among them were delegates from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the World Council of Churches and from many individual denominations. Hundreds of Roman Catholic nuns, many in their traditional habits, drew curious looks from people in the Indian

city, for they have never seen women in such attire.

"This is a very positive change," said Ninan Koshy, from India and a former director of the Churches Commission on International Affairs of the Geneva-based World Council of Churches. "For the first time, we find churches taking an active part in the World Social Forum."

An Indian church agency, Churches Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA), mounted a colorful march with hundreds of villagers and ethnic groups wearing their colorful traditional attire. CASA brought 1500 Indian participants to the Mumbai forum, while its parent body, the National

Council of Churches in India, and the WCC brought another 1550 church delegates.

Members of the All India Catholic University Federation and the International Movement of Catholic Students marched on the opening day of the forum to denounce religious fundamentalism and globalization.

Activists from around the world debated issues such as refugees, child labor, gender and race-based discrimination, and political oppression. The LWF group focused on concerns about illegitimate debt, water, peace and conflict, Dalits and caste-based discrimination, indigenous issues, and human rights in the context of globalization.

The World Social Forum focused on the impact of neo-liberal globalization and its processes which, according to critics, affect people throughout the world particularly in the developing countries, resulting in an increasing gap between rich and poor.

Muslim leads Lutheran peacemaking seminar

What is going wrong? Why are religions now associated with violence? These are some of the questions posed by the main

speaker in a Lutheran World Federation (LWF) seminar.

Sheikh Saliou Mbacki, coordinator of Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa, spoke about the LWF-initiated process, aimed at bringing religious communities across the African continent to cooperate and work together to promote peace in their region.

A major challenge of this relatively new process, according to Mbacki, is to promote a culture of peace in Africa, by engaging faith communities from the grassroots to leadership level in activities that focus on dialogue, mutual understanding, and the dissemination of information and education about human rights and humanitarian law.

"Despite our differences we all preach the same values of peace, morality, solidarity, forgiveness and love. These common values that we share should be used as a tool to combat violence and conflict in all its forms," said Mbacki, a religious leader of the Murid community, a Muslim Sufi order founded in 1888 in Senegal.

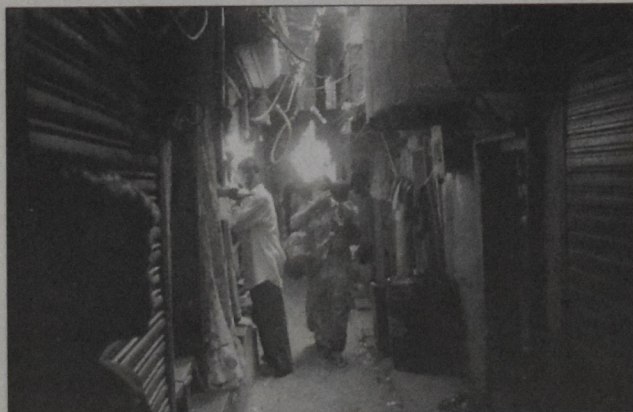
He stressed the need for Africa's religious leaders to deeply analyze "what mistakes we are making" in order to change the current trend of the association of religion with violence.

"Religion in its essence is opposed to violence but if we fall into temptations to gain power or money we will not only abandon our basic principles of morality and justice but also contribute to fomenting conflict. We should not allow ourselves to be manipulated for any purposes."

He cited a number of African communities from different faith traditions that had co-existed peacefully for decades until conflict had broken out as a result of the political manipulation of religion.

In the African context, Mbacki explained, religious leaders have in fact often responded to conflict with effective coordination in seeking peaceful ways to resolve it. He spoke of the involvement of religious leaders in peace efforts to end civil war in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and the cross-border inter-religious dialogue that started in the context of Ethiopia and Eritrea as particularly strong examples of this phenomenon. But he noted that regional coordination of similar efforts has generally been lacking, with many of such activities having been confined within national boundaries.

[Stories from the World Lutheran Federation and ENL]



Alleyway in Mumbai, India

News

Spanking

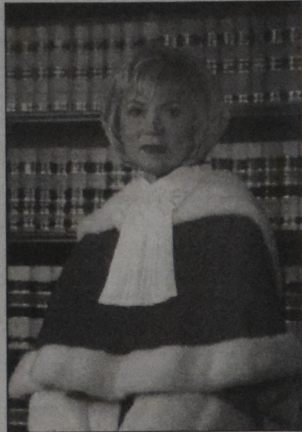
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She went on to explain that had the court banned even the use of "reasonable force," it would have resulted in teachers and parents being dragged off to jail and families being ruptured unnecessarily.

Many opponents of spanking assert that it has been proven to be ineffective as a form of long-term discipline and that it teaches violence. Those who defend its prudent use cite studies to the contrary (see the Focus on the Family website) and argue that children are quite aware of the difference between violence and spanking.

Focus Canada president Dr. Darrel Reid recently commented in the *Winnipeg Sun*, "This [court challenge] is a major and unwarranted intrusion into the lives of parents" who are "far better able to make responsible decisions about parenting their kids than lawyers or bureaucrats." Contrary to what the anti-spanking advocates claim, "This is not about abuse. There are all sorts of laws in the Criminal Code and in provincial family welfare legislations to protect against that. What we're talking about here is criminalizing what is performed at one point or another by the vast majority of Canadian parents. It's basically turning all Canadian parents who use corrective physical discipline into criminals."

The court did not actually address the issue of whether spanking was an effective form



Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin

of discipline but found no compelling reason to criminalize what is deemed part of ordinary child-rearing by most parents. Over 70 percent of Canadians are opposed to a total ban and an even larger percentage of Canadian parents admit to having spanked their children at least once.

Focus on the Family has repeatedly warned about an activist supreme court that is co-opting the prerogative of parents to decide what is and what isn't good parenting. Colby Cosh, commenting in the *National Post* prior to the decision, asks what sense does it make to have "philosopher-kings" who aren't even philosophers decide on such issues. Judicial activism means "that a gang of nutters can challenge a social consensus as old as civilization" and Canadian citizens don't have any say whatsoever in the matter.

Colson revisited

Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis



A year and a half ago in this space I dealt with the various ministries spearheaded by Charles Colson, one-time hatchet-man for Richard Nixon turned agent for God's kingdom. I suggested then that Colson is a mighty servant of God who is undertaking, among other things, to raise an awareness among American Christians of the implications of a christian worldview. It is time now to come back to Colson and evaluate his efforts further.

Colson, a Baptist, has evidently been influenced by Reformed Christianity to no small extent. His principal worldview book, *How Now Shall We Live?* (Tyndale House, 1999), was written with (and undoubtedly largely by) Nancy Pearcey, who once studied at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto. Furthermore, David Naugle, author of *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Eerdmans, 2002) and a professor of philosophy at Dallas Baptist University, has been brought onboard Colson's Wilberforce Forum, where he is publishing regular worldview update mailings to subscribers of Colson's Breakpoint commentaries.

As if that were not enough, the Rev. T. M. Moore, a minister in the Presbyterian Church in America, has recently been advocating the singing of metrical psalms on the Wilberforce website. With my own interest in metrical psalmody, this is something I find particularly appealing.

However, given his influence, Colson's approach sorely needs to be appraised in a spiritually discerning fashion. Such an appraisal reveals it to be largely on the mark, albeit with notable and not inconsiderable flaws.

First the good news. Colson is unequivocally pro-life. Many of his Breakpoint commentaries are devoted to the cause of protecting the lives of the unborn, as well as to other related issues, such as fetal stem cell research, euthanasia and cloning. Recently he has also come out in favor of the proposed Federal Marriage Amendment, which would amend the United States Constitution to recognize marriage as a distinctive institution uniting

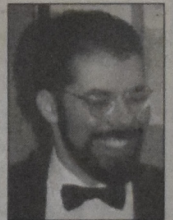
a man and a woman in a permanent sexual bond. Colson has on more than one occasion warned of the dangers of courts rewriting the constitution to suit their own ideological agendas – something which we are now experiencing in Canada.

Now the not so good news. For all his efforts to encourage American Christians to think through the implications of a christian worldview, Colson tends to draw connections that are rather too facile and make him sound merely partisan in the current political debates in his country. Commenting on President Bush's controversial Iraq policy, Colson recently observed that it is America's christian worldview that has moved that country to free Iraq from Saddam Hussein's despotic rule, while Europe, which has been so thoroughly secularized in the past few decades, has shown weakness in the face of tyranny. If this is true, then historians would have a difficult time explaining why the United States remained out of the war against Hitler's Germany for more than two years while Britain and France were fighting for survival.

That a devout Christian might have cause to disagree with Bush's policies for solid political reasons appears to have escaped Colson. Such superficial analyses make him appear little more than an apologist for the Republican Party and the current administration. Perhaps he would do well to recall where his own excessive partisanship led him some three decades ago.

That said, I would still argue that Colson's ministry deserves our support and prayers, as well as – just possibly – some gentle prodding from his Reformed readers and listeners to think more carefully through the implications of a christian worldview.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and is the author of *Political Visions and Illusions* (InterVarsity Press). His weblog can be found at: <http://byzantinecalvinist.blogspot.com/>



Multiculturalism in the Netherlands is creating "ghettos"

Holland's 30-year experiment in trying to create a tolerant, multicultural society has failed and led to ethnic ghettos and sink schools according to a government report reviewed in the *British Telegraph*. The 2,500-page all-party report by the Dutch parliament, says the newspaper, is a response to fears that the Dutch way of life is threatened by militant Islam and overcrowding.

The report praised most immigrants for assimilating and for doing well at school, but it attacked successive

governments for encouraging ethnic separatism. The worst mistake was to encourage children to speak Turkish, Arabic or Berber in primary schools rather than Dutch.



Street scene in Amsterdam with multicultural influences.

The report concluded that Holland's 850,000 Muslims must become Dutch if the country is to hold together.

In the past, the Netherlands promoted ethnic diversity even funding some 700 Islamic clubs, many of which are run by hard-line clerics. More recently the Dutch, like the English, French and Germans, have begun complaining that the immigrant communities in their borders are creating significant social problems, putting disproportionate strain on their educational, social assistance and criminal justice systems.

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Editorial

David, a few smooth stones, and life in the mines

Harry der Nederlanden

I was a miner, a hard-rock miner, like the song says. Here I was, deep underground, dressed every bit the part. A yellow helmet on my head with a lamp clamped to the front, a wide leather belt around my waist with a holster for the battery, goggles to protect my eyes, heavy boots ribbed with steel to protect my feet from the axe that was my primary tool – I looked every bit the part. But didn't feel it.

I was still learning how to walk with all that weight on my feet and on my hip, and I had to remind myself not to turn my head and look directly at the foreman when he spoke. If you did that, your headlamp shone directly into his eyes – and that made him mad. It was very easy to make him mad. He was continually berating one or the other of us novices. Of the half dozen that had started, two were already gone and two more were whining about leaving. By the end of the training period, only two of us were left – me and a tall, blond Czech who spoke a correct schoolboy English.

The veterans liked to pick on newcomers and make them look stupid. Actually newcomers tended to make themselves look stupid. We were all young guys about twenty years old, except for the Czech, who was about thirty, and we arrived by train eager to learn, eager to belong. But I quickly saw that if you looked too eager, talked too much, tried too hard to win acceptance and sought to be macho like the miners by swaggering about and talking tough, the opposite happened. You became a target.

I was never picked on, and I wondered why. Reflecting on it afterward, I came to the conclusion that I was simply

better at sensing the unspoken code or ethos that prevailed among the miners. They saw themselves as different and carried themselves differently from those who worked in the refinery above ground. There was a certain solidarity among them that was hard to define.

It helped that I was not leery about being underground but actually enjoyed it. No doubt the veterans sensed that. I also made no attempt to befriend them and force myself into their company. Newcomers tended to talk far too much, partly out of nervousness, partly to win acceptance. It was better to say little, to act as if you didn't give a rip what they thought of you, and to listen and observe.

Above all, I noticed, a miner didn't gripe about the daily discomforts of the job – about the water that trickled down your neck first thing as you climbed the narrow tunnel to your workplace or about hands stiff and sore from wielding heavy tools. The new guys did. A mistake.

I kept to myself, kept my mouth shut, didn't fawn on anybody and didn't get out of anybody's path. That was one thing I noticed quite early: that miners did not yield right of way to one another. As a result, there was a lot of bumping – a macho thing that you see in some old westerns. But among the miners it didn't lead to brawls, just to bumping or brushing past each other. You just didn't go out of your way to make room for the other guy. Let him clear his own way.

After work and supper there wasn't really much to do in the camp besides play cards and drink. Sometimes that led to fights. I ended up in the middle of one once. One of the card players threw his cards across the table, kicked over his chair and came crashing into me (a spectator), cursing and flailing. I shoved him – hard. He didn't like that and squared off against me. Taking a step forward, I just stood and stared at him expressionlessly while he blustered and threatened. At last he just stomped off. Afterward a couple of miners came to talk with me. Nothing deep. Just to ask me where I was from and such.

Another big event in the camp was mail call. Every few days we gathered at the mail shack and someone would read out the names of those who had mail. One fellow had received a letter from a girl he'd been living with in which she professed her love for him and asked him to come back to her. He read the letter out loud, laughing at the almost childlike way the girl pleaded with him. He wanted to flaunt the fact that he had a way with women: he could love them and leave them.

The performance turned my stomach and I told him to get out. When I stepped forward as if to help him along, he hid, in a hurry. A few others there must have felt the same way. Not that they said anything about the incident, but they sidled up to me and started talking. Half an hour later I found myself with a roomful of Greek immigrants talking about Plato and weight-lifting.

What caused me to recall those days 40 years ago while I was sitting in church Sunday morning? A sermon about David and Goliath.

It was Cadet Sunday, and Bert Witvoet addressed his sermon first of all to the Cadets sitting in a couple of rows near the front. Near the end, to bring the ancient story closer to the boys' experience, he compared Goliath to a bully, and he asked the boys whether they thought they'd ever have to face a Goliath in their lives.

He had already described very graphically how the little stone from David's sling had struck the giant on the forehead, stunning him, and then the bully had been killed with his own sword and had his head lopped off. "Not a politically correct thing to do," observed Bert.

No, Bert hadn't fallen into the trap of holding up David simply as a moral exemplar. He'd put the story into the context of redemption history and stressed David's faith and the connection with Jesus, the shepherd-king.

But the story has its own vivid force. When I was at the age when bullies were a problem, the story of David and Goliath was one of my favorites. And I loved to sing "Onward Christian Soldiers." Bert had to struggle some to make it clear to the boys that he wasn't advising them to go head-to-head with bullies on the school ground. What the Bible is talking about is faith and the battle against sin and evil. Ours is a spiritual battle, Bert rightly stressed.

The elements of the David story – courage and commitment – are present in spades in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy too, and they have drawn criticism from Christians oriented toward pacifism. In this day and age, don't these images promote the Texas sheriff ethos of George Bush? Yep, us good guys need to have the guts to stand up to bullies like Saddam Hussein and lop off a few heads. Isn't Bush a David?

"What?" a majority will jump up and scream: "It's Bush who is the world bully! It's those who stand up against US militarism and globalization who are the Davids."

The David and Goliath story is ultimately about spiritual conflict. But spiritual conflicts don't remain purely spiritual. They take on physical, cultural form. In this world sometimes you do have to actually take on bullies physically. And you may become a bit of a bully yourself in the process, or at least a fighter. Militant. Jihad.

That's what led to my memories of becoming a miner. What helped me to adapt more easily to the tough-guy ethos of the miners was my early experience as a minor coping with schoolyard bullies. But when I was doing the adapting, it bothered me that I adapted so easily. It bothered me, and yet I was kind of proud of the way I quite quickly fit in. Any moves I made toward being a David was largely in terms of that ethos.

There's a lot of talk nowadays of culture wars and a clash of civilizations. Christian leaders are lamenting a loss of standards and the threat of relativism. We are being urged to choose sides, to take a stand, to draw a line in the sand. The polarization is happening not just within denominations but in the political arena as well. Many evangelicals in the US, for example, are sure the Democrats are the enemy, the very embodiment of secularism and unbelief.

As an editor of this paper, I'm often urged to take a bold, clear stance on many issues, from war to homosexuality to globalization. Dare to be a David or a Daniel! Speak or act prophetically. But where's the Goliath rising up over against me hurling insults at the God of my people? Maybe I am part of Goliath now. Just as I adapted quite easily to the ethos of the mines, so I have also adapted to North American society.

Like those around me, I use up non-renewable resources to power my car and heat my home. I want a strong economy so my kids will have jobs, well-paid jobs. I want affordable healthcare as well as good roads, welfare for the poor as well as helicopters for our military. I'm committed to democracy, freedom, fairness, equality and civil order – in short, a peaceful, prosperous Canadian way of life.

Oh, yes, and I'm looking for a few smooth stones for my sling. Maybe you can help me find some.

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Letters

Martin poses question to Supreme Court about traditional marriage

Prime Minister Paul Martin at last did what the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, Gerald Vandezande and others have been asking the government to do – broaden the question Chretien addressed to the Supreme Court about the definition of marriage.

The Court has ruled that forbidding the benefits of traditional marriage to same-sex couples is discriminatory. In drawing up new marriage legislation, the government asked the Court a couple of questions so that the new law will not also be ruled discriminatory. It asked whether redefining marriage as a union of two persons is in accordance with the Charter and whether the freedom of religion guarantees in the Charter protect clergy from being compelled to marry people contrary to their beliefs.

On Jan. 28 Martin added another question asking the court's opinion on whether retaining the traditional definition of marriage is contrary to the Charter.

The Justice Department also asked for an extension to prepare additional legal arguments, effectively postponing consideration of the same-sex marriage issue until after the elections.

Martin said the added question was not an attempt to back away from the legalization of same-sex unions but that the government is complying with the wishes of many Canadians who want this question asked. He said that the government is committed to the legislation it has prepared no matter what the Supreme Court decides.

The only countries to allow same-sex couples to marry are the Netherlands and Belgium, but in those countries civil marriages are distinguished from church ceremonies, so they are not performed by clergy.

In response to an editorial in the *National*

Post celebrating Martin's move, Gerald Vandezande wrote the following letter which was published in the *National Post* Jan. 30.

Prime Minister Paul Martin's and his Cabinet's decision to add an extra question to Ottawa's pending Supreme Court reference on same-sex marriage is welcome relief for many Canadians.

It does, as you say, raise the chance that the traditional definition of marriage can be retained if the court decides the opposite-sex requirement for marriage is consistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The added question also suggests Mr. Martin and his Justice Minister, Irwin Cotler, have a much better idea of justice.

The role of the government in our pluralist society is to do public justice for all, and to devise public policies that meet the basic needs and respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of all Canadians, without discrimination, including respect for other people's religious values. So it's important that in the final drafting of legislation on marriage, we do public justice to the mosaic that constitutes Canada and the diversity of human relationships.

It is my position, as it was before the House of Commons standing committee on justice and human rights on April 11, 2003, that the traditional definition of marriage (the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others) should be maintained.

We should, at the same time, extend public recognition and public policy to same-gender relationships and to common-law couples. So, for the purposes of law, there is a public ceremony, a civil ceremony, for people to register their civil-union relationships, demonstrate their mutual commitments through a public declaration of faith-

fulness and loyalty. In that way, they decide what kind of relationship they're in, what kind of public recognition they want and, at the same time, make use of the Charter's entitlement to equal treatment for all Canadians.

We should make sure that, in terms of social and tax policies, all partners committed to conjugal relationships that are properly registered through a city hall process, receive fair treatment, and that there is no discrimination because of religion or lack of religion. It's important that the government, in its public policies, practices public justice for all, and ensures that people are not discriminated against in any way, but are equally affirmed.

The religious ceremony that a couple wishes to have should be decided by them, voluntarily, and by the faith-community with which they wish to identify. It would thus be best if the clergy-person would no longer function in a dual capacity [as servant of the state and as servant of the faith-community] and suddenly in the midst of a religious ceremony announce, "Now I, by virtue of the powers vested in me by the Marriage Act, do hereby pronounce you, A and B, to be husband and wife." Couples should go to city hall, complete the application for whatever kind of relationship they want to enter into, sign on the dotted line in the presence of legal witnesses, go through the civil ceremony, that can be short or as elaborate as they wish at city hall. Then, if the couple wishes the blessing from their faith-community at a religious service, Christian or other, that's for the clergy-person and the faith-community to decide.

It's important that not just one view of "marriage" prevails, and therefore includes under that single definition of "marriage"

all the different relationships that exist. There is a reality of difference among relationships. There is heterosexual marriage; there are same-gender relationships; and there are common-law couples. For each category we should have clear definitions.

Gerald Vandezande, C.M. Toronto, ON

God's needles and thread

For Stiny

The Lord God is a tireless knitter and his word a knitting needle, his fingers are swift as swords. Ardently he knits and darns, stitching tissue to tendon to bone, picking up again what unravels.

He bends over you, squinting to focus his artful fingers on the beadwork of your spine, threading the scarlet yarn of his passion from one vertebra

to the next, so when your rise – for rise you will – the tendons and ligaments of his body will have been woven deeply into yours. You are impaled on his love – and he pulls the thread tenderly tighter.

Do not fear the vibrations of pain: your backbone resounds to the sharp twang of his coming – more painful but also more glorious than the first.

Harry der Nederlanden



SARS from cats ... mad cow disease ... bird flu.... This world is no place for animals.

It's not MY shadow that scares me - I think I'll just stay down there.

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Media and Culture

Looking for God in popular culture

Rich Greydanus

Take a look at any one of the growing number of Christian film review sites available online and you can see the latest movies put on the moral chopping block. Reviewers give their readers a scene-by-scene breakdown of the profane language, instances of violence, and sexual content found in each film. One website went so far as to list a fleeting glimpse of a nude statue as a potentially problem with *The Last Samurai*.

There is value in these reviews, particularly for parents who are wondering exactly what their children are going to see. But is the final judgment leveled against films to be made by measuring them against a strictly defined list of do's and don'ts?

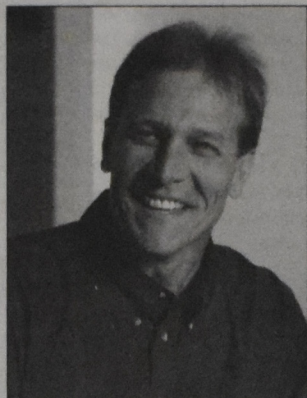
Bill Romanowski, author of *Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture* (Brazos Press, 2001), says that a Reformed vision of engaging and redeeming culture for the Lord leads us in another direction. Historically, Reformed thinkers have taken this vision to many different corners of our world. Politics, the fine arts, and trade unions have all been areas in which Reformed people have engaged. However, they have not chosen to engage popular culture to the same extent. Romanowski seems to say that it is about time they do.

Romanowski is very qualified to speak on the topic of a Christian encounter with pop culture. After pursuing undergraduate and masters degrees in English, he shifted the focus of his studies and completed a Ph. D. in American Culture Studies at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. Another publication, *Pop Culture Wars: Religion and the Role of Entertainment in American Life* (Intervarsity, 1996) received critical acclaim.

Beyond writing scholarly books on this issue, Romanowski has brought his study of pop culture on the road. He even performed a one-man play in which a living room provides the stage for a discussion of the history of rock-and-roll. He played a character who, from his couch, witnesses the development of rock music and gives a critical commentary.

Redeemer annual lecture series

Romanowski was invited by Redeemer University College to



Bill Romanowski

speak in an annual Lecture Series, held this year on January 21. Classes were run on a condensed schedule in order to make room for the addition of lectures. Romanowski delivered two lectures; the first was titled, *Developing a Christian Approach to Popular Arts*, and the second was *A Christian Critique of Hollywood Films*. Both of these were open to the public, while a third, more informal talk was held in the evening exclusively for Redeemer students. Romanowski hosted a viewing for one of the many Sylvester Stallone *Rocky* films with commentary. (By the way, word has it that another installment of the *Rocky* series is currently in production.)

In the first lecture, Romanowski argued that the Evangelical mindset has been to "baptize" popular culture by combining its artistic style with explicitly confessional content. In the 80's, Christian culture reformers asserted that what people really want is clean and morally inspiring entertainment. It is interesting that these claims were contradicted by numerous studies done by the movie industry.

The music and movies produced by Evangelical attempts to purify film-production make obvious references to Christ. Looking back, Romanowski sees how Christian filmmakers and musicians did little more than produce knock-offs by mimicking their counterparts outside of the Christian faith.

An assumption prevalent among Christians today is that Christian art is only that art which talks explicitly about Christ and the salvation he offers. The negative implication of this is that any art failing to mention Christ is not Christian and shouldn't be enjoyed

by Christians. In a picture like this, the world becomes very black and white. When the world is seen in these terms, it becomes very easy for Christians to think they can justifiably withdraw from the culture around them. Instead of engaging it, they run away.

But Christ is Lord of all of life. If we take this into account, movie making, even movie making that doesn't explicitly mention Christ, becomes acceptable. Christian producers should explore, not only themes that point to salvation in Christ, but also the reality of the fallen human condition and other such biblical themes.

The Christian faith is not the issue that Christian movie producers should explore, says Romanowski. Faith is the context. And this opens up a whole new world of possibility.

Beyond the confessional model

Evangelicals, Romanowski says, are beginning to realize that they can and should step beyond the current confessional model. Indeed, he claims that they are on the cusp of entering into a new paradigm – a broader understanding of what it means to engage culture.

Is there good reason to step beyond the confessional model? A criticism made against films that fit into this model is that they lack artistic quality. The small budgets available to Christian filmmakers

might be blamed for this. But what of the overly simplistic story lines, a trait shared with the best blockbusters? Redeeming filmmaking requires more than simply replacing violent endings with ones showing reconciliation. There is doubtlessly a great need to leave the confessional model and embrace a comprehensive view of cultural engagement.

If culture is seen as a master plan that maps out current society values, there is a dire need to tackle questionable stereotypes. To take some popular examples, we see the action-adventure hero set up in contrast to the dull husband type, and the dangerous and erotically charged female character over and against the sedate motherly woman. Physically, the grossly exaggerated figures of G.I. Joe and Barbie have become the mold into which men and women are pressured to fit.

Romanowski says that evaluating human life in terms of these four stereotypical figures has a dehumanizing effect on us all.

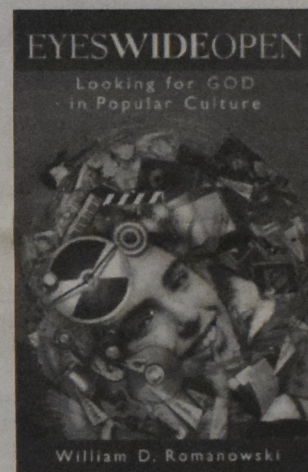
Looking deeper, Romanowski analyzed the narrative style readily found in movies. Told in terms of cause and effect, they give a picture of the world that greatly reduces the complexity of life; this cause naturally leads to that effect. But reality is never so predictable. Problems rarely have concrete solutions.

Romanowski sees the need for Christians to critically view R-

ated films, and even to be producing them. What would a Christian R-rated film look like? This raises a host of moral questions. It is clear that Romanowski's vision does not simply encourage Christians to discard all moral boundaries.

Romanowski's day at Redeemer was a busy one. In between the three presentations, he met with members of the Redeemer faculty and with students to answer questions. In the continuing tradition of annual lectures given by visiting academics, the day was thought provoking and successful.

Rich Greydanus is a student at Redeemer. He wrote this for The Crown the student newspaper.



Navigating the family movie market isn't easy — but help is available

Lisa M. Petsche

Media literacy...make(s) the difference between whether kids are a tool of the mass media or whether the mass media is a tool for kids to use.

— Linda Ellerbee, TV producer

Last month my husband and I rented a movie we expected to be suitable for family viewing. It turned out to contain crude language and a couple of sexual encounters.

Disturbingly and frustratingly, it's difficult these days to find mainstream movies that are appropriate for the whole family. Given the limited offerings within the General or Family classification (which, by the way, aren't

always suitable for little ones), parents often turn to Parental Guidance (PG) rated offerings and cross their fingers.

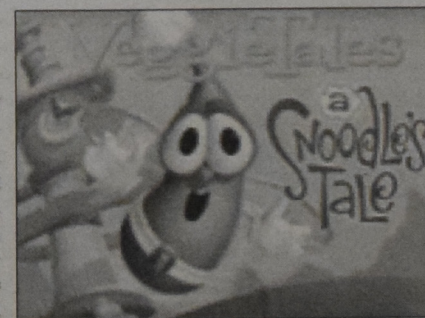
However, as the Ottawa-based Media Awareness Network (MNet) advises, "many PG movies contain explicit language, sexual content and violence."

MNet contends that violence in movies – as well as other media – is both increasing and changing in nature, becoming "much more graphic, much more sexual, and much more sadistic." Regular exposure to it can result in fear,

desensitization to real-life violence or increased aggressive behavior in kids.

Other issues that MNet addresses are stereotyping: "unrealistic standards of female beauty" and the portrayal, especially in teen

Continued on page 7...



Media

Family movie market

...continued from page 6

movies, of "risky activities – such as reckless driving, dangerous stunts, casual sex, and drug and alcohol use – as exciting and cool." Additional concerns for many parents include profanity, vulgarity, irreverence and lack of moral context.

Although we should educate ourselves about movie ratings, they're becoming less and less reliable as a guide. Some cautions from MNet: "Films that were rated Restricted (17 and over) at the cinema may become 14A when released on home video;" and "a new trend with Hollywood studios is to take teen-oriented films, add raunchier scenes and then remove the voluntary ratings," releasing them on videos and DVDs labeled "Director's Cut" or "Uncensored."

A further complication, says MNet, is that a number of different movie rating systems are used within Canada. In particular, "videos designed for home rental...can have up to three different ratings on the box – and they may not all agree," creating confusion. The bottom line is that ratings aren't always an accurate reflection of a movie's content, nor of its suitability for certain age groups.

Where to turn for guidance?

Many valuable secular resources exist, including the aforementioned MNet (online at www.media-awareness.ca), but I'd like to highlight some faith-based guides.

One is Focus on the Family's "Plugged In" (www.plugged-inonline.com), which reviews movies and videos/DVDs as well as music and television from a Christian perspective. A monthly print magazine is also available.

Another resource is the Dove Foundation (www.dove.org), a non-profit organization established to "encourage and promote the creation, production and distribution of wholesome family entertainment." It awards a blue and white Dove Seal to any movie or video that's rated "family-friendly" by its review board, which evaluates each film "based upon Judeo-Christian ethics."

And now here are some tips for managing movie viewing at home: Limit televisions (the fewer the better) to communal areas and watch movies together.

Gather information about a

prospective selection from multiple sources, including independent reviews and other parents. If in doubt, pre-screen it.

Expose your kids to a variety of genres. Go beyond the mainstream, and also include classics (many are available from the public library).

Explain to your kids why you reject certain films. When objectionable content crops up during viewing, seize the opportunity to discuss values. Avoid preaching, though.

Speak out against inappropriate material and express support for quality entertainment.

I must share a wonderful source of quality movies my family recently discovered: Feature Films for Families. A privately held company based in Utah, with a distribution centre in Barrie, ON, it produces and distributes films that are "suitable for all ages and strengthen positive values while containing no profanity, vulgarity, sexual content or graphic violence." We have already ordered several titles, which are circulating among relatives and friends, to rave reviews. Go online to www.familytv.com/canada or call 1-800-FAMILY-TV to request a free catalogue.

Another source of quality entertainment is Big Idea Productions, an Illinois-based family media company best known for its wacky, computer-animated Veggie-Tales video series. Stories provide "a serious alternative to Hollywood's unhealthy role models," promoting biblical values and encouraging spiritual growth. Go to www.bigidea.com for a complete listing of their products, available at Christian retail stores as well as some major retail chain stores. You can also sign up for a monthly e-mail newsletter to keep informed about new releases.

The reality, though, is that we can't indefinitely shield our kids from material that contradicts our family's values. That's why ultimately we must foster in them informed, critical thinking about the media – in an age-appropriate manner, of course. As a start, check out the Centre for Media Literacy at www.medialit.org/, especially the section titled "Faith-Based Media Literacy."

Lisa M. Petsche is a mother of three, social worker and freelance journalist.

Hollywood walks fine line in portraying God

Ray Waddle

"Joan of Arcadia," an hour-long Friday night drama series, has been a surprise hit for CBS. Every week, a girl named Joan has daily conversations with God as she goes about her swirling life as a modern American teenager. These aren't mountaintop epiphanies of thunder and lightning. God shows up disguised as everyday people to give Joan simple, direct advice about high school, family and relationships with the suffering people around her.

I was agnostic about "Joan of Arcadia" at first. The show is the latest entry in a long and curious Hollywood saga – the mass-media attempt to tap the deep well of American religious belief and then script a show that is both a) spiritually dignified and b) entertaining enough to be financially profitable.

It's a treacherous combination – the need to be edgy (for high ratings) and inoffensive (to that statistical 90 percent of believers). The history of this TV-and-movie search for God is a series of tilts toward blasphemy or blandness, cynicism or sentimentality. Does "Joan" suffer the same pitfalls?

A benign, non-denominational deity

Modern-day Hollywood theology, you might say, began with "Oh God!" a movie comedy that gave us the ancient and affable George Burns portraying a kindly Almighty in a baseball cap. The flick was a hit. Screenwriters had stumbled on a transcendent formula for success: Make God non-threatening, nondenominational and, if possible, hilarious. Remember, this was 1977. The nation was weary after Vietnam, Watergate, assassinations and other social convulsions. Religious pluralism was on the rise. We needed a reassuring word from a wisecracking Creator.

This benign role of deity on the big screen mutated through the '90s. Increasingly, God showed up in diverse guises, surprising viewer expectations (Will Smith in "The Legend of Bagger Vance," Michael Clarke Duncan in "The Green Mile," Alanis Morissette in "Dogma"). These incarnations glowed with serenity and wisdom, and were indifferent to church debates and denominational loyalties.

Prime-time TV, a far more conservative medium than the movies, customarily alludes to the Al-

mighty only indirectly – that is, through angels, God's lieutenants on earth. "Highway to Heaven" in the 1980s and "Touched by an Angel" in the 1990s, much beloved by viewers, offered angels who prodded us humans to live up to our better selves at crucial moments.



'Joan of Arcadia' cast members

God incarnate

But "Joan of Arcadia" does not settle for angelic messengers. The show writes a new chapter in televised transcendence. It wants God straight on – God incarnated in various people in Joan's crazy day.

The writers of the show say they take God seriously (producer Barbara Hall was raised Methodist and is now Catholic). They wanted a show that gets people talking about the nature of God, God's presence in the world, God's messages to the world.

"There is the point that God is available to everybody all the time," Hall says in a recent Beliefnet.com interview. "And a huge step into seeing God is looking for him, and that's what most people don't do. And teenagers really don't. In order to talk to a teenager today – I have a pre-teen – God would have to get her to take her earphones off. Kids don't listen. You'd really have to bust through Eminem to get to my daughter if you're God."

Does God get a fair shake on "Joan of Arcadia"? Should Christians be offended? Joan's encounters with God are usually modest, homely, brief. The divine advice she gets is helpful and action-oriented: It boils down to the Golden Rule and Ten Commandments.

Yes, a little slice of theology is implicitly at work in "Joan." In the Christian story, after all, the "face of God" is found in other people, in the jostling, dangerous, everyday world of reconciling relationships with others.

But "Joan of Arcadia" is not

church – it's a TV show, with all the rules and limitations decreed by TV. This is not the televised version of the creeds and confessions.

For one thing, God's religion is brand X all the way: There's no mention of church doctrine or Scripture or Jesus Christ. Joan was baptized Catholic, she says, but her family doesn't go to church. Everyone is oddly silent on the subject.

"On our show, God can never identify a religion as being right," Hall says in one of her own "Ten Commandments" for writing about God on TV.

Also, there's the issue of how the God characters often talk – flip and hip. Whether God appears as a middle-aged substitute teacher, a 20-something street vender or a fellow teen, they sound street-wise and sassy, as if to get a laugh. The need to entertain always comes first on TV.

And the inevitable risk, or result, is to demean the blinding majesty of God. "We believe in the one true, holy and living god, Eternal Spirit, who is Creator, Sovereign and Preserver of all things visible and invisible," one Christian confession declares. "He is infinite in power, wisdom, justice, goodness and love."

Still, it's unusual to see a TV show put some thought into the question of God's will on earth. On other prime-time dramas about religion, Hall complains, God is strictly a loving deity who "fixes everything. I don't see God as the fixer. We're not doing that. God works through people. He can guide. He gives Joan information."

As Christian teaching, this might be thin and incomplete. But this isn't seminary. A TV show about God must somehow steer between offending a world of believers and saying something spiritually interesting. It must make money.

In one episode, God, posing as a cleaning woman says, "Every decision is a chance to do something good – it's all about what you do next. Act with righteousness."

Joan gets to have hallway encounters with the Almighty. The rest of us will find the message waiting in the Bible, at worship and in the face of a stranger in distress.

Ray Waddle, a writer in Nashville, Tenn., is author of the new book, *A Turbulent Peace: The Psalms for Our Time*.

Church

Enforcement of Islamic law in Nigeria victimizes Christian women

Obed Minchakpu

KADUNA, Nigeria (Compass) — Christian leaders in northern Nigeria report that enforcement of the Islamic legal code known as sharia is continuing despite protests and drastically impinges on the religious liberty of Christians and other non-Muslims in that part of the country.

According to reports from the states of Zamfara, Bauchi, and Borno, 23 Christian women have been arraigned in Islamic courts over charges ranging from non-compliance with the Muslim dress code to prostitution for refusing to marry early.

"A woman not married, irrespective of her religious background, is seen by Muslim enforcers of the sharia as a prostitute."

On December 30, 2003, fifteen Christian women in the Sabon Gari area of Gussau town were arrested by the Islamic law enforcement unit of the Zamfara state government and stand accused of prostitution, Compass has learned.

Leaders of the Zamfara state chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) said that the accusations of prostitution were false, explaining that under the Islamic law code, every woman is expected to be married by the age of 13. Any woman found not to have complied with this requirement is considered a prostitute.

"A woman not married, irrespective of her religious background, is seen by Muslim enforcers of the sharia as a prostitute," said Rev. Linus Awuhe, CAN chairman in Zamfara state. "This is why most single Christian women — whether working or not — are seen as prostitutes and are being harassed by those enforcing Islamic law here."

The report quoted Alhaji Bello Kuceri, an official of the Zamfara State Islamic Unit, as saying, "We shall continue the raids in the Christian quarters because we are being paid to do so, and anybody caught will face the wrath of the law."

Eight Christian women in Missau town, Bauchi state, were reportedly tried and convicted in

an Islamic court for being unmarried. The women each had to pay a \$300 fine and received ten lashes as punishment. Officials then warned them to either get married immediately or risk going to prison.

In another incident, the administration of the University of Maiduguri in Borno state ordered Christian female students to adopt the Islamic dress code or be barred from sitting for their college examinations.

Professor Jibrila Dahiru Amin, vice chancellor of the university, reportedly announced that all female students must adopt the Islamic dress code beginning this month and that failure to comply would lead to expulsion.

Last November, Muslim fundamentalists attacked Christians at Maiduguri University, killing at least three Christians and destroying homes and businesses in the city. Christian leaders say the imposition of the Islamic dress code indicates that university authorities are preparing to implement sharia in the institution.

Eleven female Christian nurses lost their jobs two years ago at the Federal Medical Center in Azare, Bauchi state, for refusing to change their nurses' uniforms for Islamic dress when hospital management introduced the Islamic dress code. Their effort to be reinstated has attracted the attention of international human rights groups.

Dr. Peter Jatau, archbishop of Nigeria's Roman Catholic Church and chairman of the northern Nigeria chapter of CAN, told Compass that continuing strict enforcement of sharia in Nigeria could lead to "the incarceration of innocent Christian victims whose sin is that they are Christians."

If that happens, Jatau warned, "There would be increased tension, which would no doubt result in the occurrence of more religious conflicts in the country unless the Nigerian government acts fast to arrest the ugly trend."

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Christ, light in the shadow of death

A meditation on the Song of Zechariah by Pope John Paul II

VATICAN CITY (Zenit.org) The song of Zechariah is sung by the father of John the Baptist when his life is changed by the birth of his son. That birth removes the doubt that rendered him mute, a symbolic punishment for his lack of faith and praise.

Now, instead, Zechariah can celebrate the God who saves, and he does so with this hymn, cited by the evangelist Luke in a way that reflects its liturgical use within the early Christian community (Luke 1:68-79).



The same evangelist defines it as a prophetic song, inspired by the breath of the Holy Spirit (v 67). We are, in fact, before a blessing that proclaims the salvific actions and the liberation offered by the Lord to his people. It is, indeed, a "prophetic" reading of history, namely, the discovery of the intimate and profound meaning of all human vicissitudes, guided by the hidden but effective hand of the Lord, which is intertwined with the weak and uncertain hand of man.

The text is solemn and, in the Greek original, is made up of only two sentences (68-75 and 76-79). Following the introduction, characterized by a laudatory blessing, we can identify in the body of the canticle virtually three stanzas, which exalt as many themes, destined to mark the whole history of salvation: the covenant with David (vs 68-71), the covenant with Abraham (vs 72-75), and the new covenant in Christ introduced by John the Baptist (vs 76-79). The whole prayer tends toward the end that David and Abraham indicate with their presence.

The culmination is summarized in a concluding phrase: "the daybreak from on high will visit us" (v 78). The expression, which at first glance seems paradoxical in uniting "high" and "daybreak" is significant.

In fact, in the Greek original the "rising sun" is "anatole," a word that means either the solar light which shines on our planet, or the sprouting shoot. Both images have a messianic value in biblical tradition.

On the one hand, speaking of Emmanuel, Isaiah reminds us that "the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Upon those who

dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone" (9:1). On the other hand, referring again to king Emmanuel, he describes him as "a shoot from the stump of Jesse," namely, from the dynasty of David, a shoot enveloped by the Spirit of God (Isaiah 11:1-2).

With Christ, therefore, the light appears that enlightens every creature (John 1:9) and life flows, as the evangelist John will say when uniting, precisely, these two realities: "through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race" (1:4).

Humanity, which dwells "in darkness and in the shadow of death" is illuminated by this radiance of revelation (Luke 1:79). As the prophet Malachi announced, "for you who fear my name, there will arise the sun of justice with its healing rays" (3:20). This sun will "guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:79).

Now as we move, we have that light as our point of reference. And our uncertain steps, which daily travel dark and slippery ways, are sustained by the light of the truth that Christ sheds on the world and on history.

At this point, we would like to cede the word to a teacher of the church, the Venerable Bede (seventh to eighth centuries) who in his Homily on the Birth of St. John the Baptist, commented on the Canticle of Zechariah: "The Lord ... has visited us like a doctor does his patients, because to cure the inveterate sickness of our pride, he has offered us the new example of his humility; he has redeemed his people, because he has liberated us, who had become servants of sin and slaves of the ancient enemy, at the price of his blood — Christ found us who were lying 'in darkness and the shadow of death,' that is, oppressed by the long blindness of sin and ignorance.... He has brought us the true light of his knowledge and, banishing the darkness of error, he has shown us the sure way to the heavenly homeland. He has directed the steps of our works to make us walk in the way of truth, which he has shown us, and to make us enter the home of eternal peace, which he has promised us."

Finally, drawing from other biblical texts, the Venerable Bede, giving thanks for the gifts received, concluded: "Given that we are in possession of these gifts of the eternal goodness, dear brothers ... let us also bless the Lord at all times (Psalm 33:2), because 'he has visited and redeemed his people.' May his praise be always on our lips, may we preserve his memory and proclaim the virtue of Him who has 'called you out of darkness into his marvelous light' (1 Peter 2:9). Let us ask him constantly for his help, so that he will preserve in us the light of knowledge that he has given us, and lead us to the day of perfection" ("Omnie sul Vangelo," [Homilies on the Gospel Rome], 1990, pp. 464-465).

This is a translation by ZENIT of John Paul II's address to a general audience Oct. 1, 2003, which he devoted to the Canticle of Zechariah (Luke 1:68-79).

Religion and Politics

Arab Islamic attitudes toward Jews and Zionism

Harry Mennega

The Arab-Israeli conflict cannot be understood in merely political terms. Those who look for a solution in the fact that, after all, Jews and Arabs are "semitic cousins" and who hope for a restoration of harmony in the Middle East, underestimate the true nature of the conflict. It is not merely or even primarily political. Rather, its roots lie deeply embedded in ideological and theological convictions. The historical background to Arab-Muslim attitudes towards Jews (and other minorities) is found in the very origin of Islam and its subsequent development. My intent in this article is to set forth the main features of Arab-Islamic attitudes towards Jews and Zionism.

Muhammed's early attitude towards the Jews living in his immediate area in what is now Saudi Arabia was favorable. He expected that they would eagerly receive his new revelation. He adopted several of their religious practices such as prayer facing Jerusalem and the fast of Kippur. When the Jews were less than enthusiastic about embracing the new revelation and refused to adopt his religion, he discarded these Jewish practices. This rejection by the Jews determined Muhammed's later attitude to the Jews, and is reflected in the Koran (see below).

Islam is superior

Islam's self-perception is that it is superior. A principle attributed to Muhammad in the Hadith (Tradition) reads, "Islam is superior and nothing must be made superior to it!" Muslims firmly believe that Islam is the only true faith, that it precludes the appearance of any other valid religion in the future and supersedes those religions already existing at the time of its emergence. This superiority, it is argued, was demonstrated in the extraordinary military victories in the seventh century and Islam's subsequent expansion over vast areas in the Middle East, North Africa and Spain. Military triumphs were evident proofs of divine support.

As Allah's guardians of the truth, Muslims are the divinely chosen instruments to extend Dar al-Islam (The Abode of Islam) to every part of the world, till Dar al-Harb (The Abode of War) is conquered for Islam. The means to obtain this objective is jihad (Holy

War), to be waged forever until the Day of Judgment when the whole world is under the sway of Islam. Territorial gains made by Islamic conquest are irreversible, since by it the divine will is implemented on earth; any reversibility of jihad amounts to a sacrilege.

The Jews as dhimmis

The counterpart of the superiority of Islam is the inferiority of the non-Muslim, a superiority which comes to expression by humiliating the conquered infidel and assigning him to dhimmi status. The dhimmis, mainly Jews and Christians (people of the book), were required by law to pay a certain tax (the jizya), in return for which they were allowed to practice their religions. These minorities were to be tolerated as a sign of their powerlessness under Islamic rule. The occupation of their homeland through jihad condemned the conquered to live forever as a landless nation. It was reduced from a nation to the level of a tolerated religion.

The conquered dhimmi is considered morally inferior, often serves as a scapegoat, and is considered impure and unclean. Having received prior revelations but causing their Scriptures to be corrupted and falsified in the course of their history, these people now refusing to accept the true religion of Muhammad were tolerated but assigned their inferior status in Muslim lands.

The Koran enjoins Muslims to fight the people of the Book until they pay tribute [i.e., poll tax] readily, being brought low" (Sura 9:27). "Ignominy shall be their portion wheresoever they are" except when they grasp a "rope of Allah" (Sura 3:112). The Jews are destined for humiliation and misery:

"And humiliation and wretchedness were stamped upon them, and they were visited with wrath from Allah. That was because they disbelieved in Allah's revelation and slew the prophets wrongfully" (Sura 2:61).

"Lo, those who chose the calf (for worship), terror from their Lord and humiliation will come upon them in the life of the world. Thus do we [Allah] requite those who invent a lie" (Sura 7:152).

Drawing on these Koranic utterances and the later Hadith (Tradition), Arab writings abound in derogatory terms when describing

Jews. Jews are portrayed as proud and arrogant, as cowardly, miserly, usurious, treacherous outcasts, the scum of the earth, friends of Satan.

Etched in the Islamic psyche

This brief survey of some of the main features of Islamic beliefs serves as the background necessary for an understanding of the dynamics of present-day Arab-Islamic attitudes to Jews and Zionism. For, as the Jewish author Bat Ye'or puts it, this picture of the dhimmi has been "indelibly etched into the history and customs of the Arab-Islamic peoples."

In a penetrating analysis of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Ye'or argues that wars and conflicts are often affected on a psychological level by collective stereotyped images rooted in the traditions, culture and history of people. In attempting to pinpoint the psychological element in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Ye'or poses the question whether there is a Jewish archetype in the Arab Islamic consciousness.

She answers in the affirmative: the principal psychological element in the Arab-Israeli conflict is the archetype of the Jewish dhimmi. She shows that, from an Islamic viewpoint, the dhimmi condition remains applicable to the Jews today, and that the dhimmi archetype continues as part of the Islamic psyche to the present. Ye'or points, among other things, to the fact that the jihad has often been proclaimed against Israel; that the affirmation that the Land of Israel is Arab ("Arab Palestine") implies the Jewish dhimmi status (the Jews are a dispossessed people whose land has been Islamized); and that declarations by Muslim political and religious leaders confirm that the dhimmi condition is an obligatory status for Jews within Dar al-Islam.

Two blows

Until the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, Islam had a record of military and political supremacy in large areas of the world. Its self-perception as superior was bolstered by observable reality. Then two separate blows were struck against Islam's self-assurance.

First, "Christian" Europe began to dominate Islamic lands politically and economically -- a sufficiently severe shock in itself to make Arabs reel and wonder what

had gone wrong in Allah's world.

Secondly -- and this became the epitome of bewilderment -- it was into this situation, when Islam was still smarting from its conquest by "inferiors," that Zionism appeared in Dar al-Islam. It was not just Jews settling in Palestine, but establishing a sovereign state in 1948. As R. L. Netter put it, "How could the despised Jews, who had for centuries under Muslim rule been dhimmis and thus living in their proper place, have had the nerve and ability to do something like this?" This was an affront to Arab pride incomparably greater than their conquest by the Europeans.

In the decades following the establishment of the State of Israel, Arabs have had to come to terms with this foreign intrusion into Dar al-Islam.

The features of Islamic attitudes we have sketched here surface repeatedly in the speeches and writings of Arab leaders in the history of their conflicts with Israel.

The War of 1967

The Arab-Israeli War of 1967 was a turning point for the Muslim world. It was forced to find ways to reconcile the promise of Islam with the fact that they had suffered one of the most thorough routs in their history.

The Fourth Conference of the Academy of Islamic Research, held at Al-Azhar University in Cairo in 1968, was largely devoted to a communal reflection on the 1967 defeat. The Conference was attended by some of the principal leaders of the Arab-Muslim world, including learned religious dignitaries and academics, comprising, as one Academy member put, the enlightened elite of the Muslim world. It is striking to note that this elite proceeded to invest the traditional Islamic attitudes relating to Jews with new life and vigor.

Some of the recurring themes aired at the Conference were: Jews are the "enemies of God," "enemies of humanity," "dogs of humanity"; Jews have a history of evil qualities, their evil being permanent, impervious to all hope of reform; Jews do not constitute a people or nation, but are riff-raff; the State of Israel is to be destroyed by jihad; the superiority of Islam over all other religions guarantees that the Arabs will ultimately triumph (Arab reverses were caused by "providential design" to teach the Arabs a lesson because of their spiritual neg-

ligence); the outrage of the Jews for causing the contraction of Dar al-Islam, since it contradicts the march of history and God's design. This was not inflammatory speech-making for the consumption of the masses, but the product of the cultured, the Muslim intelligentsia.

Repeating the theme

What did these Muslim leaders say? Reading their speeches is a sobering experience. Hassan Ma'moun, Rector of al Azhar University, prayed for Nasser's success, "so as to regain Jerusalem as purified from all sorts of defilement and profanation, in vindication of the rights of Islam and the glories of the Arab Nation."

The vice-principal of Tanta Institute, Kamal Ahmad Oun, spoke of "the mischievous conduct of the Jews whose wickedness is incurable unless they are subdued by force. No good is expected from them unless they live under the aegis of Islam as loyal and obedient subjects."

A leader from Indonesia, Mohammed Taha Yahia affirmed, "I have come to this decisive conclusion that worldly avarice, obstinate contention, and cruelty are deeply ingrained in the innermost being of the Jews, who try to achieve their individual and social ambitions by fair means or foul." The Jews are "avaricious, ruthless, cruel, hypocritical and revengeful. These traits govern their lives. They never change nor are they inclined to change."

Four years later, in 1972, Anwar el Sadat used the Koran as a basis from which to draw directions for practical politics. In a speech delivered at the El Hussein Mosque in Cairo celebrating the birthday of the Prophet, he reminded his audience, "We believe, as commanded by Allah, that we [the Arab nations] are a nation elected above all nations," and promised them that they would celebrate the liberation of Palestine and the defeat of Israeli arrogance "so that they [the Jews] shall return and be as the Qu'ran said of them 'condemned to humiliation and misery'.... we shall send them back to their former status."

Similar sentiments are found in a booklet printed by the Egyptian Armed Forces Department of Printing and Publication. Published three months before the outbreak of the October 1973 War, it was aimed at Egyptian army officers and soldiers

Religion and Politics

as a morale booster. In the Introduction, then Egyptian chief of Staff, Lieutenant-General Sa'ad Shazli, stressed the value of religious belief as the basis of morale during combat and the role of Islam as the basis of all military virtues. He bolstered his call to valor and fearlessness with repeated quotations from the Koran.

"The Jews have overstepped their bounds in injustice and conceit. And we sons of Egypt have determined to set them back on their heels ... so as to wash away the shame of the 1967 defeat and to restore our honor and pride. Kill them wherever you find them (Sura 2:191; 4:91)."

The booklet states in its Conclusion: "Thus we derive from our spiritual values and religious beliefs the lofty standards to prepare men to defend truth and justice ... and to wage the Holy War for noble causes."

A turn-about?

An apparent turn-about took place in 1979. At first sight, the rationale for the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty breathes a new spirit indicating a departure from the traditional Islamic approach of constant struggle against the infidel occupying usurped land. Muslim scholars issued the so-called al-Azhar declaration which appeared on the front page of Egypt's leading newspaper on May 14, 1979.

"Al-Azhar, representing all its constituent bodies ... turns today to the Muslim world with an explanation of the religious-legal status of the Egyptian Israeli treaty... The Qu'ran commanded us to make peace with the enemy when the imam sees that there is some advantage for the Muslims in it, as Allah clearly says, 'If they are turning towards peace, then you likewise do so and depend on Allah' (The Booty, vs. 61)." To justify the Peace Treaty, an appeal was made to the agreement of al-Hudaybiyah in which Muhammad made an accommodation with the enemy.

In the year 628 Muhammad intended to engage the Meccans in battle again; on second thought, however, he decided to postpone the clash, and instead negotiated with the Meccans. The result of the negotiations was the treaty of al-Hudaybiyah. Its main condition was a ten-year truce. Muhammad entered into the agreement as a temporary truce which would give him some immediate advantages as well as a period of time in which to build his forces and strengthen his fledg-



Medina now crowds around the Mosque of the Prophet, where minarets rise above the green dome that marks Mohammed's tomb.

ling Islamic movement. Two years later, in 630, Muhammad broke the treaty, attacked Mecca and was victorious.

Whereas the 1968 al-Azhar doctrine was built on one half of traditional thought (constant struggle), the 1979 declaration rests on the other half (judicious use of treaties) by making the pact of al-Hudaybiyah the sacred precedent for the present peace treaty.

R.L. Nettler makes this poignant observation: "Al-Hudaybiyah as the main precedent in Islamic thinking for cessation of jihad in fact serves as an encouragement for renewal of battle at the appropriate time.... In facing the Jewish enemy, al-Hudaybiyah's major theme of temporary truce as a prelude to ultimate victory demands invocation, for Israel occupies central Islamic territory."

Understandably, the Muslim Brotherhood vehemently disagreed with the al-Azhar declaration. Founded in 1928, the Brotherhood arose against the background of the general Muslim reactions against Western influence and domination in the nineteenth century. Its goal is to conduct modern life in all aspects according to the principles of religion and society upon which life was based in Islam's earliest period. In contrast to the moderate al-Azhar declaration, the Muslim brothers voiced a shrill denunciation of any dealings

with Zionism; they argued that the Jews would use their new relaxed contacts with Egypt as a means to destroy fundamental Islamic outlooks and customs.

Islamic fundamentalists call for a return to pristine Islam as the only way out of the present predicament in the Arab-Israeli conflict. They perceive their self-appointed task as purging Muslim countries of alien Western influences, and of helping to create regimes on the example of the earliest Muslim polity.

Attempts at solutions

Is there a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict?

According to some Arab thinkers, the Jews and their Zionist state are bound to disappear if for no other reason than that Israel does not have much staying power in the Middle East due to its structural limitations: size, population, natural resources. Aside from these considerations, however, there is the conviction based on ideology.

Sheikh Nadim Al-Jisr, a Lebanese member of the Islamic Research Academy, declared in 1968, "As to Israel, it is not destined to remain.... I hold that view as deduced from the fundamental laws of the social order upon which the survival or annihilation of nations is based, and ordained through God's Leave, and the established rule of

historical inevitability." The ultimate disappearance of Zionism is "something woven into the very fabric of history, something fated to occur."

Underlying the view of all Arabs, whether moderate or hardline, is the conviction that "ultimately the Middle Eastern body will reject the Zionist transplant. It may take ten years, a century, or, as with the Crusader states, 300 years, but it will happen." Eventually, Islam will be victorious. Israel will be forcibly expunged as a cancerous growth in the Middle East; the insidious Zionist entity will be "liquidated" for "Palestine is part of the Arab fatherland, its people part of the Arab nation, its revolution: the vanguard of the Arab struggle to liberate Palestine."

Not every Arab voice is strident, however. C. Hourani, former advisor to President Bouguiba of Tunisia, proposed a solution as unique as it is unrealistic. The Arab goal, he argued, should not have been the annihilation but the containment of Israel as a means of weakening it and stripping it of its Zionist identity. His solution rests on a conception of past relations between Arabs and Jews in the framework of an Islamic civilization organized by the vision of total Muslim superiority over others. In other words, the solution lies in the Jews' return to dhimmi status!

A similar approach is advocated by Ghali, former Egyptian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. To him, a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict requires the de-Zionization of Israel. His proffered "substitute" for Zionism which he believes both Israelis and Arabs might accept requires Israeli relinquishment of its Zionist identity and its assimilation into the Arab homeland and so become a natural part of the area.

Zionism, from their perspective, is a misguided attempt to turn the historical and divinely willed tables. The Jews' presence in a sovereign Jewish state is not only an insufferable irritant but also an unnatural contradiction to their proper place in history and society as a "protected" religious minority under a benevolent Islamic rule. Both Hourani and Ghali are willing to recognize a Jewish religious and cultural community in Palestine, but deny the legitimacy of Jewish nationhood and sovereignty. The culprit is not the Jew; it is Zionism!

Needless to say, these "solutions," realistic from an Islamic perspective and, on their terms, preferable to the forcible liquidation of Zionism, are totally unacceptable to the Israelis. Their hard-won gains in the establishment of their own sovereign state are simply non-negotiable. Israel will not buy peace on Arab terms.

Bat Ye'or correctly states that a pre-condition for true peace in the Middle East calls for the elimination of the dhimmi archetype from Arab Islamic thinking. The discarding of this belief held for thirteen centuries implies that Arabs would have to accept that the gains of jihad are indeed reversible and that the Holy War is not a divinely infallible decree. As Ye'or puts it, the pernicious myths must be destroyed.

For a Muslim to give up these basic tenets of his faith, however, requires nothing less than a miracle. Until the "pernicious myths" are indeed destroyed, the conflict is bound to continue.

Discarding an ideology

Whether sanity will prevail and deeply-ingrained archetypes will disappear, only the future will tell. Ideologies, however firmly held, do crumble in the face of hard reality, as the recent disintegration of Soviet communism illustrates. The "one truth about how society should be ordered" has been jettisoned in the Soviet Union in a manner thought to be totally impossible years ago. Michael Gorbachev had the courage to declare on February 5, 1990, "We should get rid of ideological dogmatism."

Whether an ideology which retrieves the values of the glorious past will similarly crumble remains to be seen. What emerges clearly from the material presented in this article is that a dramatic ideological change is called for, a revolution of the mind. Will Arab-Islamic leaders ever be able to say what Gorbachev said before meeting with the Pope in 1989: "We no longer think that we are the best and are always right"?

Arts and Worship

Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away

Remkes Kooistra

Eros, sexual love, is an essential part of human love. It is one of the forms in which love reveals itself and in which it is recognized.

To some, indeed, eros is the *summum bonum* [greatest good] of love; to others, a phenomenon necessary for procreation. To still others, eros is a captivating vampire that we might do well (or better) to be without. Some have experienced eros as the entrance into heaven; others as the portal of hell. Eros, more than anything else, has inspired poets. Life without eros seems to be utterly dead and unexciting.

C. S. Lewis on Eros

In his *The Four Loves* C. S. Lewis repeatedly compares friendship and eros, and we do well to listen to him. After repeating that companionship is the matrix of friendship, he adds that out of friendship eros may be born. Thus the sequence can be: companionship → friendship → eros. Hence friends and lovers may still be "traveling companions" but on a different level. Lewis puts it this way: "We picture lovers face to face but friends side by side; their eyes look ahead" (p. 63). With lovers, companionship changes its direction. The issue becomes the other person.

Let Lewis explain this too: "If one who was first, in the deep and full sense, your friend, is then gradually or suddenly revealed as your lover, you will certainly not want to share the beloved's erotic love with any third. But you will have no jealousy at all about sharing the friendship" (pp. 63, 64).

Later Lewis writes: "Friendship is utterly free from affection's need to be needed." On the same page we read: "Friendship, unlike eros, is unacquisitive. You become a man's friend without knowing or caring whether he is married or single... In a circle of friends each man is simply what he is" (p. 66).

Lewis points out another aspect of the difference. "Lovers are always talking to each other about their love; friends hardly ever about their friendship. Lovers are normally face to face, absorbed in each other; friends side by side absorbed in some common interest. Above all, eros (while it lasts) is necessarily between two only. But two, far from being the necessary number for friendship, is not even the best" (p. 58). In other words, lovers seek privacy and exclusivity, but friends seek company and are inclusive.

Commenting on how eros is born, Lewis says: "When two people... discover that they are on the same secret road... the friendship which arises between them will very easily pass — may pass in the first half hour — into erotic love" (p. 63).

Let me conclude this survey with a final quotation: "Eros will have naked bodies; friendship naked personalities" (p. 67). These quotations from Lewis's *The Four*



Drawing by Karen Laub-Novak

Loves are helpful toward understanding the differences between friendship and eros.

The Ways of Eros

Looking at the last quote from C. S. Lewis's book, one may ask: Why is eros always interested in nudity? The makers of television programs seem to be well aware of this. Often their programs are announced as: "Contains mature material," or: "The next program contains nudity. Viewer discretion is advised." These alerts allow those offended by nudity to turn to another channel. On the other hand, these producers also capitalize on the attraction of nudity. And this attraction is by no means only of an artistic nature. It is the attraction of sex.

The human personality seeks erotic stimulation and excitement. This explains why magazines like *Playboy* keep on existing year after year and try to picture ever greater nudity. Go one step further and you have obscene, pornographic material.

Lovers are always bodily involved. They must touch each other. Otherwise they describe their companion as a "cold fish."

We have to acknowledge the difference between friendship and eros. God created them both. They are unchangeably different. The one is not more important than the other. Together they govern our humanity.

Why are lovers always undressing each other? Why do they enjoy each other's nudity? It seems to be because they long for a deep, intimate unity. The two want to become one and to be one. They tell each

other: "You are always on my mind" or "in my heart." They say: "We are two souls glowingly forged together." (This figure of speech is from one of the dramas of Vondel, the famous Dutch poet from the seventeenth century.)

Thinking of the desire for physical unity in erotic relationships, I always get the gut feeling that somehow we humans have in us the memory of an original unity, a memory of being Adam before there was also Eve. And yet Adam discovered that he could not obtain full humanity all by himself. The one needed to become two, but the two again want to become one in the act of erotic love. Later I'll say more about this.

In the act of sexual intercourse the seed seeks the ovum, the egg, and the egg selects the seed, accepting it or rejecting it. There is in the act of sexual love the interplay between giving and receiving. He gives, she receives.

Yet, in receiving she is not just passive as was often thought. She wants to receive as much (or more) as he wants to give. But he has to win her consent, her permission, and even her encouragement. Love motivates her as well as him.

We may even use other words for the act of sexual love. It is the encounter of the one opening up and of the other entering. The second action is often called "penetration." But I don't like that word. It sounds too much like male dominance and even suggests rape. Rape is the betrayal of the dual-

ity in the sexual encounter. Rape is not love.

Eros in the Bible

When reading the Bible, one soon discovers that the New Testament devotes no space to eros, but that the Old Testament devotes an entire book to this form of love. It is called the *Song of Songs*, which means the greatest song, the top song. In this *Song of Songs* eros gets its rightful place. Here the physical, sexual character of eros is displayed unashamedly.

The song is so sexual that many exegetes of the Christian era did not know what to do with it except to give it a spiritual meaning by allegorizing it. Thus the song was often considered to be about "God and Israel" or about "Jesus and the Church." This idea would often give free play to fantastic suggestions, such as, that the two breasts of the beloved signify the two Testaments of the Bible.

For our purpose it will not be necessary to present a complete explanation of the song. Great poetry is to be enjoyed, not to be dissected.

The first thing that struck me when reading this song again was its determination. Here there are no ifs or maybes. The beloved is also the lover. As in Hebrew worship, the female partner speaks first. She takes the initiative. She starts with a very sexual note: "Let him kiss me," and for emphasis she adds, "with the kisses of his mouth" (1:1). She does not want it to be a secret: She wants to be kissed; she needs her lover's kisses. She confesses that she is in love and that she can hardly wait any longer: "let us hurry" (1:4). She swoons, "I am faint with love" (2:5).

*And yet, not yet, let us still wait:
Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you
by the gazelles and the does of the field
Do not arouse or awaken love
until it so desires* (2:7).

Being in love is not yet making love.

In this song there are no shortcuts, no quick one-night stands. The lover does not want to break the spell of love's tantalizing presence until the time has fully come. Making love should be the crowning fulfillment of being in love. Being in love is so sweet that the beloved is afraid to taste the rich wine of love too soon.

And so, there she is, the beloved of the lover, and he is there too: the lover of the beloved. Both are torn to pieces by desire and yet waiting, waiting for the great experience of becoming one.

Oh, let it come soon, very soon. Let us celebrate the wedding. The guests have come. Dinner is being served. "He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love" (2:4). She needs raisins and apples to be able to stand the tension, for she is "faint with love" (2:5). Never has erotic foreplay been described more eloquently than in this song.

Arts and Worship

In the next strophe we momentarily take a step back. Here we are not yet in the banquet hall; the time for the full celebration of their marriage has not yet come, it seems. The lovers are not free from the world in which they live and its problems. Life and love are always endangered. The song of songs is being sung in the real world. Sometimes the lovers can't see each other. Then they yearn for the moment of new togetherness. This is what the lover sings:

*My dove in the clefts of the rock
in the hiding places on the
mountainside,
show me your face,
let me hear your voice; (2:14)*

But can it happen, right now? No, there is work to be done, work for love's sake.

*Catch for us the foxes,
the little foxes,
that ruin the vineyards, (2:15)*

But this is not the only problem the lovers face. More serious is that the beloved has lost contact with her lover. How sad this is! No wonder she can not sleep. She cries and wails:

*All night long on my bed
I looked for the one my heart loves;
I looked for him but did not find him.
(3:1)*

She simply cannot stay in bed. Up she gets, out she goes, not minding any dangers. Street after street she explores. She sees watchmen, making their rounds, and asks them anxiously and eagerly: "Have you seen the one my heart loves?" (3:3). Then, suddenly, there is the surprise, the great relief:

*Scarcely had I passed them
when I found him the one my heart
loves. (3:4a)*

Now she can breathe again. All sadness is gone. All anxiety has vanished. The beloved exclaims: "I held him and would not let him go" (3:4b). She feels a wonderful happiness deep inside.

After this – the most dramatic episode of the poem – the lover speaks. He must talk about the beloved, his beloved lover. It becomes a long song, the longest one in the book. He cannot keep silent. Here is his love song:

*How beautiful are you, my darling!
Oh, how beautiful! (4:1)*

(Yes, here the lover needs exclamation marks. Comparison follows comparison.)
*Your eyes behind your veil are doves.
Your hair is like a flock of goats
descending from Mount Gilead.
Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just
shorn....*

Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon....

Your temples behind your veil

are like halves of a pomegranate.

Your neck is like the tower of David....

Your two breasts are like two fawns....

*All beautiful you are, my darling;
there is no flaw in you (4:1-5, 7)*

The lover's love for the beloved is something total. He loves her with his body and soul, with his heart and mind. All his senses are involved; his total personality is saturated with eros.

He loves her with his eyes:

How beautiful you are, my darling! (4:1)

And yet in the description of the beauty of the beloved he never becomes vulgar. There is some healthy restraint in this song. Here it involves the sense of taste:

*Your navel is a rounded goblet
that never lacks blended wine (7:2).*

Sandaled feet are mentioned and graceful legs, but not the beloved's private parts as in much of modern literature. This restraint, far from diminishing the erotic effect of this sexy song, only increases it. This is the secret of real eros.

This total love also involves the ear, the sense of hearing:

*My dove, ... show me your face,
let me hear your voice;
for your voice is sweet, (2:14)*

The sense of smell is also involved; in fact, it is mentioned many times:

*Your plants are an orchard of
pomegranates
with choice fruits,
with henna and nard,
nard and saffron,
calamus and cinnamon,
with every kind of incense tree,
with myrrh and aloes
and all the finest spices. (4:13-14)*

His total love for the beloved involves a maximum of touch:

*Your stature is like that of the palm,
and your breasts like clusters of fruit.
I said, "I will climb the palm tree;
I will take hold of its fruit." (7:7-8)*
A marvelous figure of speech indeed!

When the beloved thinks about her lover, it is much the same thing.

It involves the sense of sight:

*turn, my lover,
and be like a gazelle
or like a young stag
on the rugged hills. (2:17)*

And later still, there is fragrance, lovely smells:

*His cheeks are like beds of spice
yielding perfume.*

*His lips are like lilies
dripping with myrrh. (5:13)*

And finally the sense of touch:

*I found the one my heart loves.
I held him and would not let him go (3:4)*

This is perhaps enough on the *Song of Songs*; you may have experienced the taste of honest, passionate eros in these lines.

As the beloved holds on to the loved one "and would not let him go," so the lover clings to the beloved one:

*I said, "I will climb the palm tree;
I will take hold of its fruit (7:8)*

The palm tree carries its fruit near the top; to reach it one must climb. With love, take nothing for granted. You have to climb for the delights of eros. Eros is not cheap;

it is not for nothing. But eros is worth a difficult climb. Her reward is sweet and rich.

It is noteworthy that in the *Song of Songs* the beloved is the tree and the climber is the lover. In Western erotic literature the lover is often depicted as the oak of strength and the beloved as the vine clinging to the oak. In Hebrew it is just the other way around. The matriarchal character of the *seder* celebration is to be found in many Jewish stories: Eve is smarter than Adam, Sarah is smarter than Abraham.

Desire for unity

Sexual attraction is indeed very strong. It's a passion. It cannot be compared with any of our likes and dislikes. The *Song of Songs* tells us:

*Place me like a seal over your heart,
like a seal on your arm;
for love is as strong as death,
its jealousy unyielding as the grave.
It burns like blazing fire,
like a mighty flame.*

*Many waters cannot quench love;
rivers cannot wash it away.*

*If one were to give
all the wealth of his house for love,
it would be utterly scorned. (8:6-7)*

As I explained earlier in this chapter, in our erotic love is a strong desire for unity. The two still want to be one, as we were once in Adam. But the Creator who made one to be two, also decreed that the two never could become one again. In expressing our sexual love, there is always, inevitably the experience of the orgasm. At the same moment that the lovers feel the closest to being one, they break apart and become two again. It is what we might call "creation order."

Lovers often say more than they can make true. "I will always think of you." "Let us be one forever." But it is impossible and not even necessary. The lover of Lanna is in the end completely amiss. He is not God. If he kills Lanna (as he does in this novel), he is a murderer. God be merciful to him.

In other words: we are allowed to enjoy our erotic love only within the limits God has given us. To do this is to do what is right. Even Eros must obey God.

Notes

C. S. Lewis. *The Four Loves* (London and Glasgow: Fontana Books, Collins Clear Type Press, 1960).

[This is a much abbreviated version of a chapter from Remkes Kooistra's as yet unpublished book, tentatively entitled *God, Love and Sex*.]



Woodcut from *The Greatest Song* - in critique of Solomon.

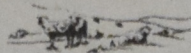
Available from Tuppence Press: www.seerveld.com/tuppence.html

Country

Too far gone?

COUNTRY COUNTERCULTURE

VERN M. GLEDDIE



A controversial book on mad cow disease or bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) may be available soon. It reads like science fiction, but is current in situation. The disease and related ones in several species, including humans, are brought on by side-effects of high-tech science and industry. Scientists, industry, politicians, the press, some sectors of the cattle business, even ordinary citizens contribute to its appearance.

Indiscriminate dissemination of chemicals, radiation and noise is behind the debilitating and fatal disease. There are pre-existing contributing imbalances in nature. But no deficit in nature equals the unbearable burden on life and health imposed by hi-tech careless pursuit of riches and convenience.

Some individuals are genetically predisposed to this modern nemesis. The fact that perhaps most are not does not take away from the cataclysmic effect the world over. Compromising important life systems for the sake of "progress" takes a dreadful toll, not only of lives, but also of life in general including economics, political stability and public confidence.

As the number of cases of BSE increases around the world, the long-standing theory of hyper-infectivity as the cause becomes increasingly suspect. It fits neither established scientific criteria, nor common sense. Instead, there is clearly a set of extenuating circumstances contributing to the disease.

The book ties mad cow disease to industrial pollution. Some fertilizers and pesticides render copper, necessary to brain function, unavailable. Effluent from the stacks of large petrochemical complexes also ties up copper in the soil making it unavailable to grazing animals. Copper deficiency coincident with a surplus of ferromagnetic elements such as manganese allows for substitution for copper in the brain, rendering it sponge-like in appearance. Manganese poisoning occurs in natural but drought-stressed situations, in proximity to chemical dumps and in questionable use of some waste products for feed. The ferromagnetic substitution for copper in the brain radically changes the function of the brain. Light and sound can then enter the brain in harmful quantities and destroy it in a few years time.

Low frequency noise near airports and defense research stations contribute to the onset of spongiform disease. Clusters of brain diseased animals of various species are found in the vicinity of constant booming noises. Farmers notice animal victims react violently to any noise, even the rattling of a tether chain.

Radiation plays a role too in the onset of the dreaded disease. A nuclear plant meltdown forms clouds of radiation, which drift hundreds of miles. Eventually the radiation sifts down in Europe with rain followed by large outbreaks of mad cow disease. Out on the North American prairies radiation and BSE crop up in the vicinity of oil and gas wells. There, gas is vented from wells with significant changes in soil chemistry downstream. Also, with the oil comes out radiation. A worried shop owner working in the oil patch wonders about the effect on him and his workers. Every oil patch vehicle in

for repair he tests with a Geiger counter and the readings are often off the dial. What he does not know is that his unfortunate set of circumstances is resulting in the gradual development of holes in his brain.

A science fiction book might introduce eminent scientists investigating disease in sophisticated laboratories with dramatic results. Not so in this book. Rather, a self-educated biochemist who has no degrees behind his name takes it upon himself to research unique situations in the environment of his own and neighbors' farms that have experienced BSE. He does not have any confidence in the current popular infectivity theory being pursued by the scientific community. Scientists, in fact, routinely violate their own rules (Koch's Postulates) in their research and reporting.

The incidence of spongiform diseases creates a worldwide furor largely because of poor science. The theory of hyper infection results in panic around the world as hundreds of thousands of animals are destroyed in an attempt to stamp out the malady and prevent its spread to humans. Professional jealousy and pride among researchers compromised by funding from parties implicated in the onset of BSE prevents the advance of science and produces severe international financial and social consequences.

Politicians, ignorant and concerned mainly about getting re-elected, opt to go with popular opinion.

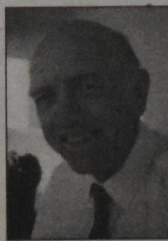
Because a theory is being pursued as fact the press often gives it factual basis.

Governments throw more and more money at the problem instead of investing in comprehensive research into incidence and cause. Some governments are compromised because they have advocated the use of questionable pesticides or been lax in regulating pollution. Politicians and civil servants thus implicated in the onset of BSE now flip flop whichever way they can to avoid massive litigation.

In the meantime, apathetic and self-indulgent citizens continue with their lives trusting that government and industry leaders will continue to ensure their comfort. Some representatives of huge factory-style cattle operations even conspire with top levels of government to keep national borders closed in violation of international agreements hoping that when the carnage is over, they will have the advantage of being able to pick up the pieces and continue on as before.

In the meantime the field studies of the farmer turned biochemist reaches around the world with startling conclusions.

Can anything be redeemed from such a complex mess? The book provides the reader with a choice of more than one outcome. None is a happy ever after.



Vern Gleddie lives on a sheep ranch near Edmonton, AB

First blizzard ...

Berta Hosmar

While I'm writing this article, it's still snowing and blowing outside, and the temperature has dropped to minus fifteen degrees C.

We'll remember the month of January, 2004 for its bone-chilling temperatures and its heavy snowfalls here in Ontario and in most of the other provinces. But do we ever appreciate our homes and shopping malls, after running from our cars to their comforting and welcoming warmth!

How did the early pioneers survive the harsh winters? How did they cope without electricity or running water or oil or gas furnaces?

I still vividly remember our first winter here in Canada, when these thoughts often crossed our minds. It was the winter of 1953/54 and we lived in Nova Scotia, somewhere in the country, not too far from the town of Truro.

It was here that we survived our very first blizzard.

The house we lived in had a large family room, so on Sunday evenings the young people of our small Christian Reformed congregation, which worshiped in the village town hall, met at our house for Bible study and fellowship. These Sunday nights were highlights in our immigrant lives.

Cars, mostly very old models, started to arrive at 6 o'clock already. All of us had recently arrived from Holland, and here we could exchange stories of our adventures in this foreign land, we could support each other and simply have fun.

Only this particular weekend things did not quite work out as planned. Our nearest neighbor, who lived about a mile down the

road, had given us some helpful hints after he heard the weather forecast. Severe weather was on the way.

He made sure we had snow shovels, that we carried several pails of water from the outside pump to the kitchen, in case the pump should freeze, and he told us to move several loads of firewood from the shed to the back room, just in case the coming snow would make it hard to reach the woodpile in the shed.

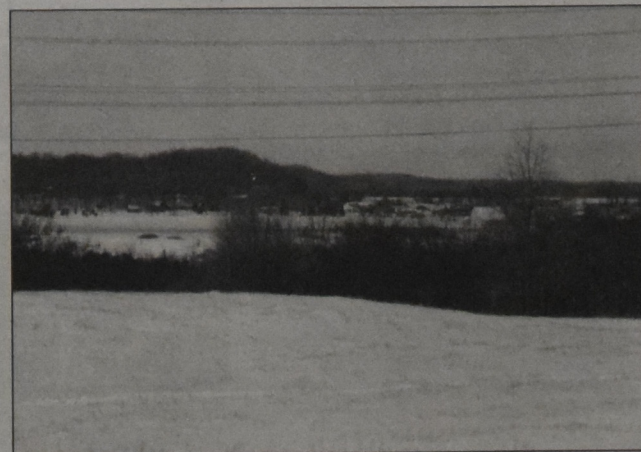
There was no furnace in the house, but my dad and brothers had spent all of their spare time chopping wood for the living room stove, which heated most of the house, while the kitchen range took care of the rest.

Secretly we thought the neighbor was over-protective. We had seen snow in Holland many times and lived through freezing temperatures. Undoubtedly it would be colder here with more snow – but so what!

There were nine of us: our parents and seven children, ranging in age from nine to twenty-four, plus a boyfriend who came hitchhiking from Halifax every weekend, so together we could certainly weather the elements.

The first hint of something unusual happening came in the form of the boyfriend, who already arrived on Friday afternoon, instead of on the customary Saturday. "My boss sent me home early because of the coming snowstorm," he informed us.

We looked at the darkening sky and noticed that the wind had picked up, but it was warm and cozy inside, and not until the middle of the night, when some of us were awakened by rattling windows, did we realize that the storm had arrived.



Country

in Canada



The next morning we could not believe our eyes. Snow was coming down so heavily that we could not see the road or the driveway or the shed anymore and the wind was howling around the house. My brother tried to open the front door but was literally blown back into the house.

"We've got to start shoveling, or we won't be able to get to the pump anymore!" he yelled.

"I've read somewhere that you have to tie a rope from the door to the shed or the barn, and hang on to it, or you might get lost and freeze to death," warned our mother.

We thought that was rather far-fetched, but after some hours of blowing snow and zero visibility we admitted she had a point.

The temperature dropped steadily and the men in the family kept busy feeding the stoves, chopping more

wood and bringing in more water.

"So now we have become water carriers and woodcutters," sighed my younger brother, clearly thinking of better days back in Holland.

That Saturday we experienced a lot of togetherness, more than we had bargained for.

We cleaned the house, read books, ate, played games and listened to the weather forecast, but since we did not own a television set we had to use our imaginations to avoid becoming utterly bored.

"Oh well, tomorrow this storm should be over and we can go to church and have the Young People meeting here at night," one of the girls consoled herself, but we did not share her optimism.

"The snow is at least a foot deep on the driveway, if not more. If it keeps on snowing we won't be able to get to the road," Dad warned. And indeed, in spite of all the shoveling that had been done, we were still at least twenty yards away from the road, a road we knew to be buried somewhere under the snow.

When we went to bed, the snow was still coming down, and the next morning a strange sight greeted us as we stumbled downstairs after repeated wake-up calls from Dad. Mother was seated in front of a red-hot stove with her coat, scarf and boots on.

"My front is warm, but my back is still cold," she shivered.

It was by no means comfortably warm in the living room, for the temperature had again dropped dramati-

cally. The storm showed no signs of petering out, and we realized to our dismay that we were stuck in the house and stuck with each other.

The driveway had disappeared again under mountains of the white stuff, and unless we were rescued by a snowplow, we could be prisoners here till spring, we told each other. We tried calling friends, but we shared a telephone line with two other families, and it was constantly busy.

"Maybe they'll send a helicopter to take us to church," my nine-year-old sister remarked hopefully.

Dad had other ideas. "It's Sunday, and just because we can't go to church today, that doesn't mean we can't celebrate the Lord's Day here at home," he told us.

An hour later his reluctant and somewhat un-cooperative congregation sat around the stove, dressed in their Sunday Best - Mother's idea.

Dad had taken several sermons along from Holland, and he started the service by singing a few Dutch psalms, accompanied by his flock and by a daughter on the pedal organ, which had also been brought from Holland.

Dad sang the loudest, our mother joined in, but the younger generation felt somewhat embarrassed and giggled irreverently.

But the sermon was easy to understand, so we started to pay attention, and during the "Middenzang," a psalm sung halfway through the sermon, our oldest brother got into the spirit of things and fetched Dad's hat to take up the collection. He solemnly passed it over our heads with a flourish, just like the deacons did in our church back in Holland, when the black velvet offering pouches attached to a long pole were presented to the congregation.

A few of us had money in our pockets and equally solemnly dropped their gift in Dad's hat. "I want mine back later!" whispered one of my sisters.

Mother, clearly enjoying this interruption, passed around some of the "holy" candies set aside only for church - King peppermints. She had purchased them the previous Sunday from a fellow immigrant. He imported Dutch merchandise, which he took to church and sold immediately after the service. After all, people lived miles away from each other.

We were reverent when Dad said the closing prayer, and when we

See *Blizzard* page 16 ...

After the Buzzer

Tim Antonides



Thoughts from the back row

It's my burden in life to sit beside annoying people. For some reason, God has decided to smite me with an endless procession of loudmouths, fanatics, and sweaty guys with the body odor of a flatulent skunk. In movie theatres.

On red-eye flights to Toronto. At hockey games.

Ah, yes, hockey games. The 15-game Canucks pack I bought with three other guys has placed me in the top row of the arena right next to a nightmare.

She's in her late 30's, wears a Canucks jersey, and seems fairly unassuming.

She's harmless enough. Until she opens her mouth. Then for the rest of the game, our row is subjected to a nasally whine that spews a steady diet of complaints about absolutely everything: The uniforms are ugly. The beer is too warm. The crowd keeps standing up and blocking the view.

Then there's her searing commentary on the game. The clichés steadily roll off her tongue. "C'mon, guys. We need you to play 110%. You gotta play 60 minutes, not 40. You gotta put the puck in the net. You're getting beaten to the puck. You can't give up a soft goal like that." Somewhere tossed in there is usually the "My dog can play better than you guys" line. The culmination of the performance is normally her early departure (with meek husband in tow) with five minutes to go in the game because the Canucks are losing by two.

The reactions of people in the row is a case study in sociological phenomena. Some of the people in the row yell insults at her in a desperate attempt to get her to shut up. Her seeming lack of awareness of this only enrages them more. Others turn and give her the frown of death or mimic what she says.

Me, I'm a slow burner. My philosophy has always been that the best way to handle any negative emotion like anger is to cram it deep inside your consciousness until it forms a tight ball. Then it will just go away. So I use mechanisms. I offer a sarcastic jibe about her to my seatmate. I pretend that she's not irritating me. I yell at opportune times in the game to get out my frustrations or at least drown out her voice. I've even waved at her and yelled, "Don't come back" after she's started walking to the exit. To tell her the truth that she is (probably inadvertently) causing a lot of people a great deal of annoyance would be too difficult. At least to do it respectfully and without venom.

This has gotten me thinking about speaking the truth in love. I am starting to realize more and more how rare it is for us to tell each other the truth when we need to hear it. I thank God for good friends in my life who have had the courage to tell me what I really needed to hear, even if I really resented it at the time. I'm not talking about the crass, harsh criticism that many reality TV shows seem to thrive on, but rather an honest assessment of one another rooted in a spirit of love.

The truth is, I'm annoying and objectionable - probably to others but definitely to my Lord. I just happen to believe in a Savior who can look past it to see what's worthwhile in my heart. He'll sit beside me, regardless of how much I let him down and how grating my failures become.

Tim Antonides is back to teaching in Surrey, B.C. after spending a year in grad school.



Winter time

This is a time of simple things, of joys that winter with it brings, of woollen scarfs and cosy mittens, of pretty sweaters soft as kittens,

and comfy socks for little feet of one who's tender and so sweet. And while I knit my thoughts grow mild as they are staying with the child....

Until, from knitting needles tired, I snuggle closer to the fire to read a book and glance at flames that in the woodstove dance.

At times I put my book aside to listen to the storm that rides and say a prayer, to safeguard those who travel on the treacherous roads.

Didy Prinzen

Reflections

"In Your Name"

It is a risky business to criticize the prayers of fellow believers, so I am about to get involved in a risky business. To do that one must have a weighty reason, beyond just nit-picking and making mountains out of molehills. I've been thinking about this matter for a several years and since I'm not getting any younger I've concluded it is now or never. So bear with me as I make a case against the general use of the concept "In your name" as the basic plea for our right to be heard by our Father in heaven, whose name must always be hallowed.

I begin by pointing out that Jesus said plainly, in John 15:16: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father *in my name*, (italics added) he may give it to you."

Obviously the focus is on the Father as the object of our prayers and Jesus as the way to the Father. His name unlocks the doors of heaven to our petitions. When we pray this way we are praying to the Triune God through the Savior, in the power of the Holy Spirit. That is the setting for our pleading with God the creator and the Lord of our life.

Risky business: tritheism

Now what is happening when we pray, "In your name?" To whom are we praying? Well, we are not taught to go to the Father "in your name," so it must be that

we have either the Son or Jesus in mind. I have never been under the impression that it is "the Son" who is being addressed in such situations but that it is Jesus. (There is some good distinction to be made concerning the person of God the Son and the person Jesus.) It is also quite clear from the fact that many prayers are addressed to "Dear Jesus."

It would seem to make no sense to pray "In Jesus name" when the prayer is addressed to Jesus. But what then, is the relevance of concluding our prayers "In your name?" And beside making no sense, is it possibly the problem that praying to Jesus is the really risky business that is going on in much of the church today?

Why is it risky? Because praying to Jesus "in your name" could put us on the way to some real heresy. For it puts us in danger of separating the three persons of the Holy Trinity by tacitly ignoring the Father to whom, according to Jesus, we are taught to address our petitions. That is an old heresy called tritheism, which is, essentially, belief in three separate Gods.

According to a friend of mine there are other indications of the danger of tritheism in the church today. He points out that a recent change in the Apostles' Creed so indicates. We used to say:

I believe in God the Father, Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth,
And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten
Son, our Lord.

Now, in the CRC, we say:

I believe in God the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son,
our Lord.

According to my friend that is a small but significant nudge into the direction of tritheism when we make a separate "I believe" in Jesus Christ after the "I believe" in God, especially with the omission of "and" in the second article, disconnecting Jesus from the Father

Models and role models

Now all of this is quite subtle and we are not in an age that is into what is subtle, but the long range import needs careful attention. That is why it is important that we receive proper leadership in what we all do every day, that is, in how we pray.

We used to be instructed in this when the ministers faithfully preached the Heidelberg Catechism, and we were all reminded in L.D. 46-52 how we should pray. Sad to say this is fast becoming an oddity in many pulpits, so we are being taught mainly by example. And that teaching leaves much to be desired when it comes to the use of "In your name." You can find it being used by some who ought to be role models, for they are ministers, many of whom are writers of meditation pamphlets. "In your name" is as common as the proverbial "stones in the street." While there are precious few stones in our modern streets, would that the same could be said of this faddish usage in prayer.

For that is what it is — a fad, likely begun

by someone who felt, yes felt, very chummy with Jesus and found a new way to feel good. And a gullible Christianity follows meekly in line, also gaining some good vibes of intimacy. That of course is not to knock intimacy in prayer, which is all about intimacy. But then we need to ask: What has become of our intimacy with God the Father, Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?

I also begin to wonder if there is not a larger and possibly hidden agenda at work, very subtly reacting to the Father image of God. I hope that would be far from the heart of good Reformed Christians, but in this egalitarian age the Father concept of God does not go down well. It may be that I am a bit overly suspicious but I would rather err in that direction than to be so naive as not to see the possible connection between this mentality and feel-good theology. There are too many people who don't feel good about a Father God. They have an agenda and are not unwilling to promote it by brash or by subtle means. We will do well to keep our eyes and our minds open to what negatively impacts our vision of and intimacy with the Triune God to whom we address our prayers.

Ty Hofman is a Yankee-Canuck and retired minister of the Christian Reformed Church, living in Grand Rapids, Mich.



Blizzard

...continued from p.15

looked at the clock only forty minutes had passed. "That went fast," said Dad, "maybe we can have another service this afternoon." But he met with rather loud opposition.

The rest of the Sunday passed much like the previous day. More futile snow-shoveling, more games, more reading, some bickering. The pump had to be defrosted with pails of boiling water. The snow still came down and the wind was still howling. But there was a ray of hope, for the radio predicted that the worst of the blizzard was over.

We all went to bed early hoping for better days ahead. We realized how much we had missed our church service in the town hall and our Young People's gathering.

The next morning we woke early for, lo and behold, it was light and bright outside and a pale sun appeared on the horizon.

We ran to the windows and we could see a still, starkly beautiful, pristine-white world. But by now we had had more than enough of snowflakes, and the sight did not move us to nurture poetic thoughts.

Surely the snowplow would arrive some time today, so the driveway had to be



cleared. But that proved to be an almost impossible task. The men of the family tunneled their way out of the house through snowdrifts that were more than five feet high in some places.

"Just keep digging, or we might still perish," one of the girls admonished her brothers,

who showed signs of wanting to take a good long rest. The remark was not received kindly, and a shovel was thrown in her direction.

But after a few hours, a loud rumbling noise was heard. It sounded like music to our ears. It meant our deliverance was near.

We ran upstairs to get a better view, and soon a couple of heads were sticking out of a hastily opened window.

"Let's wave a white bedsheet, to show them we are still alive!" suggested one of the girls, who suffered from too much imagination.

We cheered loudly and waved enthusiastically when the snowplow reached our house. The driver, clearly pleasantly surprised by this outpouring of appreciation, waved right back and blew kisses at the girls.

But then our joy turned to dismay, for the snowplow had dumped several yards of snow right in front of our driveway.

"Now what?" asked Dad, perplexed, for the snowplow continued down the road, leaving us prisoners once more.

But then we heard more rumbling. And our faithful neighbor arrived with a smaller version of a snowplow, and without further ado proceeded to drive up and down our driveway, opening a road to freedom for us.

We have weathered many blizzards since that first time, but we won't forget that first one in our adopted country!

Berta Hosmar lives in Whitby, Ontario.

Opinion



Yes... but

Bert Hielema

A week or so ago I went to that new Buffet Only Restaurant. For \$6.25 I could eat all I wanted. And more.

No wonder there is an 'obesity epidemic,' arguably the most serious public-health problem facing the world. One out of six globally have a weight problem. Three of every five Americans – 60 percent! – are now overweight, and some predict that today's children will be the first generation whose life expectancy will actually be shorter than that of their parents.

Culprits?

For one, big food companies and public eating places are pushing supersize portions of foods on us and our children, many of whom never eat *en famille*, snacking either alone at home or away, with disastrous consequences for family life and long-term health.

The blame also lies with government and corporate policies and farming practices. Big business is a big obesity booster. Corn along with most other agricultural commodities is abundant and cheap. The easiest thing to do with the surplus is to turn it into more compact and portable value-added commodities: corn sweeteners, corn-fed meat and highly processed foods of every description. Until we deal with this glut of cheap calories coming off the farm, it is unlikely that our public-health campaigns will have much success changing the way we eat.

It used to be that plenty was followed by famine. You may remember the story of Joseph in Egypt, the seven fat years followed by the seven lean ones. For a long time the norm was feast or famine: from the years 500 to 1500 Britain suffered a major corrective food shortage about every 10 years. Relates *The Economist*: "in 1321, some 20 percent of English people are reckoned to have died of famine." We now have gone the other way: feast upon feast and overfed in the process.

Undernourished too.

In earlier times, when prices fell, farmers would cut back on production, shrinking the supply of food to drive up its price. But now they do precisely the opposite, planting and harvesting more food to keep their total income from falling, a practice that of course depresses prices even further. Add to this logic the constant stream of improvements in agricultural technology (mechanization, hybrid seed, agrochemicals and now genetically modified crops, all fueled by cheap oil), and you have a sure-fire recipe for overproduction – another word for way too much food.

And then there is subsidy: while one hand of government is campaigning against the epidemic of obesity, the other hand is actually helping it, by writing farmers a cheque for every bushel of corn they can grow,

especially in the USA. A triple waste because that cheap-food farm policy comes at a high price: first there's the \$19 billion a year the US government pays to keep the whole system afloat; then there's the economic misery that the dumping of cheap American grain inflicts on farmers in the developing world, who can't compete; and finally there's the obesity epidemic at home – which dates from the mid-70's, when official farm policy became geared to the overproduction of grain. Since that time, food growers in the United States have managed to produce 500 additional calories per person every day. Now, on an average, each of us is day by day packing away some 200 extra calories. The other 300 – mostly surplus corn – get dumped on overseas markets or turned into ethanol.

The World Health Organization (WHO) wants to battle this addiction globally by restricting advertising aimed at children and increasing junk food prices through taxes and adjustments in farm subsidies. But Washington does not want to offend its corporate supporters, who also have a death grip on television, the other great American drug, which has created a new human specimen: couch crouchers.

My grandfather had a farm, no electricity, a couple of horses, a dozen cows, pigs, chickens, and, in spite of a monotonous diet of potatoes and lard and buttermilk porridge, he was as lean as a pole. Hard physical work, lots of walking. We now let our fingers do the walking and the talking, as everything, also farming, is done by our energy slaves, which has made cheap corn the building block of the 'fast-food nation.'

Cheap corn

Cheap corn, the main ingredient of high-fructose corn syrup, is what allowed Coca-Cola to move from that slender 8-ounce bottle in the 70's to the monstrous 20-ounce jug of today.

Cheap corn, transformed into cheap beef, is what allowed McDonald's to supersize its burgers and still sell many of them for no more than a dollar. Cheap corn gave us a whole raft of new highly processed foods, including the oh-so-fat chicken fingers, which, if you study the ingredients, are really a most ingenious conversion of corn, from the cornfed chicken it contains to the bulking and binding agents that hold it together.

Cheap corn – but at what price in the long run? Before 1900 horses, mules, and oxen provided the farmers world-wide with 'horsepower.' The drawback was that these animals ate close to a third of what was grown. Then came oil, to power tractors, and natural gas, the basis for fertilizers. Thanks to these carbon-based fuels, the world population could explode from one billion in 1820 to more than 6 billion today. When my grandfather did his primitive

farming, he procured pure, unpolluted products.

Today, when I have my breakfast cereal, the grinding, milling, wetting, drying, and baking of the grains, the packaging, the trip to the store, means that I basically eat oil for breakfast. I don't mean that I have a glass of oil on the table. What I do mean is that every single calorie I eat is backed by at least ten calories of oil. Often more, because for many their breakfast room comes with a steering wheel and a gas pedal, thanks to Drive-through.

Oil for food

No wonder that David Pimentel, an expert on food and energy at Cornell University, has estimated that if all the world ate the way we eat, humanity would exhaust all known global fossil-fuel reserves in just over seven years.

A few weeks ago, out of the blue, we learned that farmed salmon had such a high content of pollutants that we were told to eat it sparingly, while wild salmon made the grade. I am pretty sure that the same holds true for most cattle, pigs and chickens. Close to eighty percent of our beef comes from feed lots, where the cows spend their adult lives packed shoulder to shoulder in a space not much bigger than their bodies, up to their knees in shit, being fed grains and a constant stream of antibiotics to prevent the diseases this sort of confinement promotes. Bon appetit. Enough to drive cows mad, and people sick.

My grandfather used the manure to fertilize his fields, but for feedlots manure is waste and for us a danger: breathing out methane, a global warming gas, and polluting water sources. When you eat that steak, remember it takes thirty-five calories of fossil fuel to make one calorie of beef this way, even more to make a calorie of pork.

But we are the example the world wants to follow. We see chickens densely packed in cages also in Southeast Asia where they are infected by the Avian Flu. It went through my mind that these people, who practically live with these birds day and night, are mostly immune to their diseases, just as Europeans, coming to North America in the 17th and 18th Century were not affected by the measles and small pox that decimated the then native populations. If ever Bird Flu comes our way, we might not have the natural resistance. But that's another worry.

My current worry is how long we can continue to eat oil for food. How long will it take for the demand of oil to outstrip supply? Up till now we've had a buyer's market. When will it become a seller's market? When will the big roll-over be?

No drawings are allowed in my column. So I appeal to your artistic talent. Take a pencil and draw a hill, sloping slightly up and down at first then more steeply, about

as high as it is wide. That represents all our oil supplies forever: coming on stream slowly, a sudden growth, then decline. According to many geologists, we are now close to the top, the half-way point. With demand increasing and supply stagnant at best, we have a problem. A huge one. You can see it on the US Geological Society Web site: www.oilcrisis.com/magoon/ We are entering a critical phase much sooner than expected.

Four years ago I picked up a \$150.00 book, *World Energy Outlook 2000*, published in Paris by the International Energy Agency. It then predicted that a barrel of oil would have an average price of \$21 until 2010 after which it would rise to \$28 through 2020. The last time I looked, it was close to \$35, and in Barron's this week I saw that experts expect oil to cost \$50 soon. A real warning is that in the last 5 years the world consumed 27 billion barrels of oil annually but discovered only 3 billion. Sooner rather than later, we will see gasoline go to the highest bidder, with disastrous results for the world's economy and agriculture.

High inflation, high interest rates, high trouble.

At Davos last week, Morgan Stanley Chief Economist Stephen Roach said, "Today's engine of the global economy, the unbalanced US, is right now running on fumes. Global reliance on fossil fuels is destabilizing global politics and devastating the global environment." Better get that veggie garden going in your back yard. I've read somewhere that all the food one person needs can be grown on a 2,800 square feet, a 50' x 56' plot.



Bert Hielema lives in Tweed, Ontario.

the Netherlands

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Israeli legislators launch group to forge ties with Christians

Ross Dunn

Jerusalem (ENI)—Members of the Israeli parliament have forged the country's first political caucus aimed at strengthening ties with Christian groups that support the Jewish state.

Co-founder Yuri Shtern, from the right-wing National Union coalition, said it is the first formal lobby group within the Knesset to promote parliamentary contact with Christian groups and leaders. Shtern said the group hopes to reach out to Christians in Europe and in the United States.

"Israel has no better friend in the world than the United States, and that is no small part due to our Christian friends in America, and we hope to see the same happen in Europe, and elsewhere," he told reporters.

Shtern believes there is a strong basis for greater friendship between Christians and Israeli Jews, despite strong international criticism of Israel over its treatment of Palestinians, much of it coming from church groups which condemn Israeli occupation of the West Bank, where most Palestinians live.

"Our shared values, and beliefs, based on our common Judeo-Christian heritage, are the source of the strong ties between us," Shtern said. The parliamentary group aims to seek regular contact with Christians overseas who support Israel and to lobby on behalf of such Christians to enable them to visit, live and work in Israel, Shtern said.

He said the forum should have been established much earlier in order to counter the growing world sentiment against Israel following the start of a Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule more than two years ago.

Despite the conflict, a number of mainly American, Christian Zionist groups have remained steadfast in their support of Israel. Among them are Bridges for Peace, Christian Friends of Israel and the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem. Representatives of these organizations, all of which have offices in Jerusalem, are expected to attend the inaugural meeting of the caucus in the near future.

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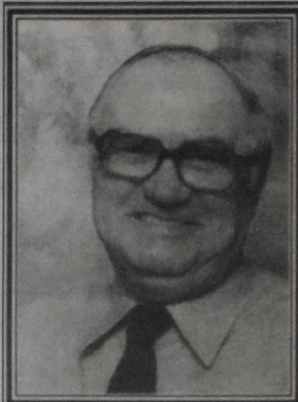

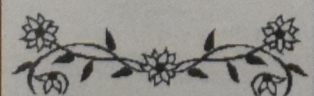

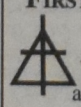
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| <p>For Rent</p> <p>2 bedroom country home \$700 per month (first & last) Available Feb. 1st on Read Rd. St. Catharines. Call 905-937-0416. View by appointment only.</p> | <p>Apartment for rent in Holland</p> <p>Fully furnished apartment in Voorschoten. Sleeps six persons and is only 10 minutes from railway station. 250 euro per week. Available this summer from June 14 til July 31 '04. Use of car is possible at additional charge.</p> <p>Met vriendelijke groeten</p> <p>Contact at +31-71-562-2465 or email huizengaa@planet.nl</p> | <p>WANTED TO PURCHASE</p> <p>50 copies of the Blue Psalter Hymnal, 1976 edition. Please contact: Immanuel United Reformed Church PO Box 55, Listowel ON N4W 3H2, or the clerk: Neil Bakelaar, 519-291-6808, or E-mail: aliceneilbake@datastore.ca</p>  |
| <p>70TH ANNIVERSARY SARNIA FIRST CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH May 15 dinner at 5:30 p.m. (reservation needed) 7 p.m. program at Sarnia Christian School May 16: Celebratory Anniversary Worship Service Contact firstcra@xcelco.on.ca for more information, or call 519-336-8808</p>  | <p>HEBRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH 4240 Anderson Street Whitby, Ontario</p> <p>50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS</p> <p>Saturday April 24 Open House & Kids' Events 2-4 pm Banquet - 5:30 pm Music and Memories Evening 8 pm</p> <p>April 18 & 25 10 am Celebration Services</p> <p>Banquet tickets & information 1-905-655-5020 office@hebroncra.ca www.hebroncra.ca</p>  | <p>REFORMATION TOUR</p> <p>15 fun filled days of learning and fellowship April 19 - May 4, 2004 Free stop-over in Holland \$ 3295.00 p.p. ex. Tor. dbl. occ. plus dep. taxes</p> <p>Visit: Martin Luther area.....Erfurt Learn: About John Hus.....Prague Enjoy: The music.....Vienna The Catechism.....Heidelberg</p> <p>Personally escorted by: Rev. & Mrs John and Rita Klomps</p> <p>For complete information and reservation, please call or write: Rev. John G. Klomps Advantage - Meadowvale Travel 2283 Argentia Rd., Unit 9B Mississauga, ON L5N 5Z2 TeL: 905 - 826 - 4141 or toll free: 1 - 800 - 387 - 2421 Fax: 905 - 858 - 1704 Home tel: 905 - 824 - 5074</p> |
| | <p>FIRST CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF MONTREAL will celebrate its 50th anniversary D.V. May 29th, 2004 and cordially invites all former members and pastors. R.S.V.P. before Apr. 30th.</p> <p>Photo's & images of past and present would be appreciated. Phone 1-514-684-4430 [7-10 p.m. EST] E-mail: georgelucy@aei.ca</p>  | |

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Mr. John Kamphof, Chair, Search Committee and Chair, Board of Governors
c/o The King's University College,
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Bill Helmus, Elementary Principal

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Wat is er mooier om deze week naar Schoonoord te komen met vakantie en dan tevens de oude bekenden de hand te drukken, en het glas te heffen op ons mooi dorp.

Het programma is nog niet definitief maar een foto expositie mag natuurlijk niet ontbreken. Dus heeft U nog oude foto's zend die dan voorzien van naam en adres zodat ze weer bij de rechtmatige eigenaar terug bezorgd kunnen worden. Aansluitend is er een revue in de grote feesttent.

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April 3 at 2 p.m.

JORDAN, Christian Heritage School

April 24 at 8 p.m.

For tickets to the above performances, please send cheque and stamped self addressed envelope to:
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Tel: 519-283-6285

- or -

Jan Wubben, 390 Mill Street, Woodstock ON N4S 7V6
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC.
In case of free listing, space limitations apply.

The charge otherwise is \$7.50 per line, or \$1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion

- Feb. 29** A dutch service will be held in the **Ancaster** Chr. Ref. Church at 3 pm, Rev. M. Koops preaching.
- Mar 26,27** The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "De Avond van de zevente Juli" 2 pm & 8 pm at **Woodstock** Market Centre Theatre. Phone 519-283-6285 or 519-539-8940 for more info.
- Apr 3** The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "De Avond van de zevente Juli" 2 pm at Evergreen Senior Centre, **Guelph**. Phone 519-283-6285 or 519-539-8940 for more info.
- Apr. 10** **Annual Festival of Praise** by the **Christian Male Chorus** Association of Southwestern Ontario. 7:30 p.m. Centennial Hall, 550 Wellington St. **London**. Five choirs with over 200 men participating. Tickets: \$13 (519)451-5484 or email: jettrick@sympatico.ca For information: (519)637-4357.
- Apr.18, 24, 25** **Hebron CRC, Whitby**, Ontario, 50th anniversary celebrations. See ad next issue or phone 1-905-655-5020 or website www.hebroncrc.ca for more info.
- Apr 24** The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "De Avond van de zevente Juli" 8 pm at the **Jordan**, Christian Heritage School. Phone 519-283-6285 or 519-539-8940 for more info.
- Apr. 24** The MEN OF PRAISE (from Woodstock) in concert, at the Ebenezer CRC, **Jarvis** Ont., at 7:30 pm. Freewill offering.
- Apr 30** The **First Royal Dutch Treat** will take place at the Liberty Grand, Exhibition Place in **Toronto**, Ontario. More information to follow in March issues.
- May 2** **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Cresendo Male Choir** 7:30 pm Knox Presbyterian Church 55 Hincks St, **St. Thomas**. Freewill offering for Canadian Bible Society. (519)637-4357
- May 15,16** **Sarnia** First Christian Reformed Church, 70th Anniversary. Contact firstcra@xcelco.on.ca for more information, or call 519-336-8808. See ad this issue.
- May 29** First Christian Reformed Church of **Montreal** will celebrate its **50th anniversary**. Ph: 1-514-684-4430 or E-mail: georgelucy@aei.ca See ad this issue

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| | | |
|----------------------|---------|------|
| Burns Lake - CFLD | 9:15 am | 1400 |
| Osoyoos - CJOR | 8:00 am | 1490 |
| Penticton - CKOR | 8:00 am | 800 |
| Port Alberni - CJAV | 7:00 pm | 1240 |
| Prince George - CIRX | 7:00 am | 94.3 |
| Princeton - CHOR | 8:00 am | 1400 |
| Smithers - CFBV | 9:15 am | 1230 |
| Summerland - CHOR | 8:00 am | 1450 |
| Vernon - CJIB | 9:30 pm | 94 |

ALBERTA

| | | |
|---------------------|---------|------|
| Brooks - CIBQ | 8:30 am | 1340 |
| Ft. McMurray - CJOK | 8:30 am | 1230 |
| High River - CHRB | 6:30 pm | 1140 |
| Edmonton - CJCA | 6:00 pm | 930 |
| Westlock - CFOK | 7:30 am | 1370 |

SASKATCHEWAN

| | | |
|----------------|---------|------|
| Estevan - CJSL | 8:00 am | 1280 |
| Weyburn - CFSL | 8:00 am | 1190 |

MANITOBA

| | | |
|------------------|---------|------|
| Altona - CFAM | 9:30 am | 950 |
| Steinbach - CHSM | 9:30 am | 1250 |
| Winnipeg - CKJS | 9:00 am | 810 |

ONTARIO

| | | |
|--------------------|---------|------|
| Atikokan - CFAK | 9:30 am | 1240 |
| Chatham - CFKO | 6:30 am | 630 |
| Guelph - CJOY | 8:30 am | 1460 |
| Hamilton - CHAM | 7:30 am | 820 |
| Kapuskasing - CKAP | 7:00 am | 580 |

| | | |
|-------------------|---------|------|
| London - CKSL | 7:00 am | 1410 |
| Oshawa - CKDO | 8:00 am | 1350 |
| Owen Sound - CFOS | 7:00 am | 560 |
| Pembroke - CHVR | 10:00am | 96.7 |
| Sarnia - CHOK | 7:30 am | 1070 |
| Stratford - CJCS | 8:45 am | 1240 |
| Windsor - CKLW | 7:30 am | 800 |
| Wingham - CKNX | 10:30am | 920 |

NEW BRUNSWICK

| | | |
|-------------------|---------|------|
| Saint John - CHSJ | 9:00 am | 94.1 |
|-------------------|---------|------|

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

| | | |
|----------------------|---------|-----|
| Charlottetown - CFCY | 7:00 am | 630 |
|----------------------|---------|-----|

NOVA SCOTIA

| | | |
|--------------------|---------|-------|
| Bridgewater - CKBW | 7:30 am | 1000 |
| Digby - CKDY | 6:00 am | 1420 |
| Halifax - CFDR | 8:30 am | 780 |
| Liverpool - CKBW | 7:30 am | 94.5 |
| Kentville - CKN | 8:30 am | 1490 |
| Middleton - CKAD | 8:30 am | 1350 |
| New Glasgow - CKEC | 7:30 am | 1320 |
| Shelburne - CKBW | 7:30 am | 93.1 |
| Sydney - CJCB | 7:00 am | 1270 |
| Weymouth - CKDY | 8:30 am | 103.1 |
| Windsor - CFAB | 8:30 am | 1450 |

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ALBERTA Lethbridge - CJIL Thurs. - 9:00 am Sat. - 2:00 am

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News

Jazz Vesper services

Calvin's innovative Thursday-evening Jazz Vespers service began in November 2000. Since then it's produced about 80 services for Calvin students and anyone else who wants to attend. And now it's produced an album called "Jazz Psalms" and an accompanying booklet of sheet music.

Jazz Vespers at Calvin combine music, poetry, art, scripture, prayer and live jazz. Ron Rienstra, who works for Calvin in student worship, says the Calvin Jazz Vespers are patterned after the traditional services of the Anglican and Episcopalian traditions, including music, prayer and Scripture. That's the Vespers side of the equation. But the Jazz side comes into play with how those elements are presented. Readings are often poems and observations from a variety of authors, some Christian and some not. Music, led by the Jazz Vespers band, is set to free-flowing jazz harmonies and improvisations.

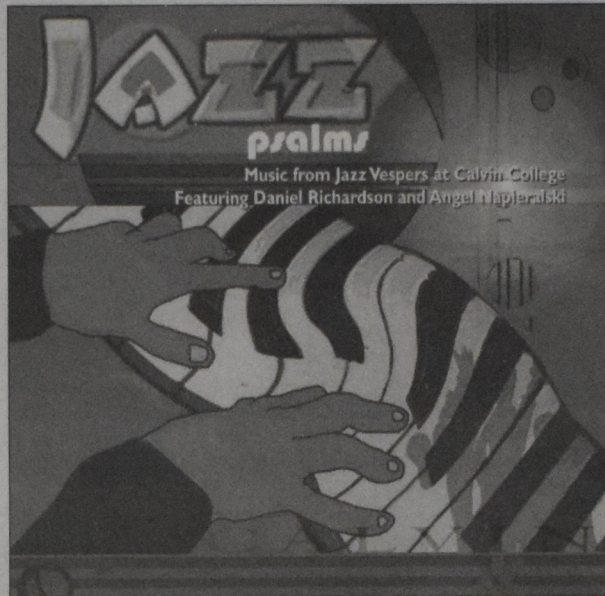
But each week one of the key pieces in the service is the evening Psalm. "It can be," says Rienstra, "a song of faith or doubt, praise or lament or all of the above. And it's offered responsively: singing, speaking, singing, speaking."

The 14 tracks on "Jazz Psalms" flow from the Psalms prepared for the Jazz Vespers services the past three-plus years. Vocalist on all 14 is Calvin student Angel Napieralski of Grand Rapids.

Former Calvin student Daniel Richardson has been a local church music director and a professional jazz musician. He heads up the music for the weekly Jazz Vespers at Calvin and also took a lead role in the production of the new "Jazz Psalms" album.

"He did all the instruments," says Rienstra, "and produced and arranged all 14 tracks. He also wrote most of the songs with Angel."

Rienstra hopes that the new album and booklet will



be a resource for churches that would like to try something a little different in worship services, but aren't sure where to start.

"On our website," he notes, "we are permitting, even encouraging churches to use these Psalms in their own worship." That website even includes free PDF copies of select psalms that Rienstra says "combos with even modest chops should be able to handle."

The new album is made possible by support from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship which is eager to promote psalm-singing in numerous forms and cultural contexts. It is available at the Calvin College Bookstore for \$15. A complete booklet of charts/sheet music will be available in the bookstore for \$20.

Contact Rienstra at 616-526-6717

For sample audio recordings, sheet music and more see: <http://www.calvin.edu/admin/chapel/worship/jazz/record.htm>

Aggressive critique of Islam hurting evangelism

Evangelical Christian leaders in Europe and America are cautioning their constituencies that aggressive critique of Islam, denigrating comparisons of religious beliefs, name-calling, and declarations that Allah is not the God of Christianity are not just harming relationships between Christians and Muslims but are also making evangelism more difficult.

Attacks on Islam tend to deepen tensions and discourage contacts, which in turn hurts witness, for the latter occurs mainly through forming friendly relationships.

In Utrecht, Holland, Toby Howarth, an Islamologist and evangelist working in Rotterdam among Muslims, told his audience that although there are deep differences between Christians and Muslims in their views of God, we must begin by saying that Allah is the same God as the God of Christianity.

He tells Muslims, "I have come to know the same God, but in a different way. I am now not afraid to call him Father." Christians converts from Islam often put it this way, he says.

H. M. Vroom, Prof of Sociology of Religion and Philosophy at the Free University, speaking at the same conference, stressed that we must begin with the idea that God does already have a relationship with Muslims.

Howarth reminded conferees that Jesus, too, began with people where they were, "and then he went on to show them something they didn't expect: he revealed God as the suffering God who was ready to die for us."

Another pastor working among Muslims in Rotterdam suggested that if you don't begin by showing the other respect—respect for their unique experience and their beliefs—you cannot win their trust. He said that he has noticed a hardening of attitude among Christians over toward Muslims but that this is true even more so on the part of Muslims.

A Dutch organization established to create dialogue (or trialogue) among the religions of the Book (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) has not been very successful, said Vroom. Muslims are reluctant to enter into dialogue. While many in the West are fearful over toward Islam, he noted, Islam has had more reason to fear the West, for it has been much more powerful. [Files from Nederlands Dagblad.]



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